University of Alberta

Existence and Possibilities: Citizenship, High School, and At-Risk Youth

by

Susan E. Nobes

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

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Abstract

Data were collected for this study, a qualitative case study, from various sources, including the parents of a daughter with educable mental handicap (EMH) and professionals from education, justice, health, and law enforcement. Student voice is expressed through collage descriptions as artifacts and the interview narratives of adult informants.

Other data include on-site observations in secondary schools, and federal, provincial, and school district document analysis concerning citizenship and transition education for persons with developmental disabilities.

Using the metaphor of Cinderella and relevant literature, critical theory is considered throughout the text. Of particular interest to some readers are the perspectives of parents regarding citizenship and the contemporary issues faced by their adolescent educable mentally handicapped daughter. Striking findings are evident in the responses offered by a professional educator who advocates on behalf of a pregnant EMH teen , inviting the reader to consider their own views on parenthood and parent education as a part of citizenship education for persons with developmental disabilities. The teacher's perceptions and struggle with the Otherness of disability combined with student socioeconomic difference suggests that the preparation of educators may fail to adequately consider certain marginalised youth.

This struggle is also apparent in findings presented from the informants employed in the professions of health nurse, law enforcement, and legal counsel. Findings which indicate unique difficulties faced in the secondary school setting and greater community by youth new to Canada and assessed as EMH, as well as their Aboriginal Canadian counterparts are discussed. Gaps exist between the research literature and what exists in the federal and provincial documents and other data, and what schools provide as citizenship education for EMH youth. The document concludes with recommendations for various stakeholders and an invitation for further collaborative study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The metaphor of Cinderella has been selected to guide this study, which examines what exists as the citizenship and transition education of students with developmental disabilities attending secondary schools. The researcher's voice is expressed as a mentor Fairy Godmother, and the students, both male and female, are seen as tentative Cinderellas awaiting an elusive invitation to attend the Prince's ball. In this text, attendance at the Prince's ball is the achievement of full citizenship in mainstream society, a position anchored in the Canadian federal government's vision paper *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* (Human Resources Development Canada [HRDC],1998).

To maintain site anonymity, the three schools included in the study are identified as Northern Turnpike: Magnet, Northern Turnpike: Satellite, and Southern Turnpike. The origin of these names lies with a quotation included in the text, a caution on the tendency of critical theory to create a logical road map to future emancipation. With an emphasis on informant voice, interview transcript excerpts are complemented by the literature and the Fairy Godmother's story of the research experience.

Definition of Terms

The following terms appear in this study:

Citizenship and transition education

Citizenship and transition education may be comprised of learning opportunities that provide a connection between the school environment and the community environment. Emphasis is placed on the enhancement of participant knowledge, social relationships, skills, and attitudes that will contribute to the long-term quality of life beyond the school setting for students and their families. To encourage the development of resiliency, a sense of empowerment, reduced risk, and the promotion of good physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual health for students with intellectual/developmental disabilities, the learning experiences address specific contemporary social issues of particular relevance to youth with developmental disabilities (Nobes, 1997). For this discussion, citizenship and transition are considered as the demonstration of social responsibilities necessary for the development of a supportive community, inclusive of individuals and respectful of human rights (Lynch, 1992; as cited in Osler, Rathenow, & Starkey, 1995).

At-risk youth

The term at-risk youth, as it is described in a school district document that formed a part of the analysis for this study, refers to high school aged youth with exceptional needs.

Developmentally disabled

The developmentally disabled are

> those who suffer from chronic disabilities attributable to mental or physical impairments, or a combination of these, which are manifested before age 22 and which result in functional limitations in major life activities requiring special services and treatment that are of extended duration or are lifelong. (Winzer, 1994, p. 691)

Educable mentally handicapped (EMH)

Any student designated as having a mild intellectual disability should have an intelligence quotient (IQ) in the range of 50 to 75 (±5) as measured on an individual intelligence test, have an adaptive behavior score equivalent to the mildly delayed level on an adaptive behavior scale, and exhibit developmental delays in social behaviors. (Alberta Education, 1997b, p. 23)

Empowerment

> Empowerment is a multidimensional construct that can be expressed in an individual's attitudes, knowledge and behavior, and can be displayed in a variety of environments. The components of empowerment include a sense of control, self-efficacy, participation, an understanding of the environment, access to resources, and an ability to meet personal needs. (Dempsey, 1996; as cited in Nobes, 1997, p. 1)

Self-determination

Self-determination is the ability to consider options and make appropriate choices regarding residential life, work, school, and leisure. Experiential building blocks are preparation for making critical life choices (Schloss, Alper, & Jayne, 1994; as cited in Stowitschek, Laitinen, & Prather, 1999).

Resiliency

Sagor (1996) defined resiliency as "the set of attributes that provides people with the strength and fortitude to confront the overwhelming obstacles they are bound to face in life" (p. 38). He identified these attributes as feelings of competence, belonging, usefulness, potency, and optimism. Life issues of significance are discussed in the literature review and may include, but are not limited to, early pregnancy, poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, isolation, involvement with the justice system, physical or sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and discrimination.

Service learning

The service learning approach to instruction integrates school-based instruction with community service and interpersonal skill development. Service learning provides an education in good citizenship. By engaging youth in learning activities to meet real community needs, we can help students develop an ethic of service, along with the character and habits of community participation needed to ensure that they are prepared for responsible citizenship (Riley, 1996; as cited in Vickers, 1997).

Community education

Community education is a concept which perceives education in a broad context as any experience that helps you deal with another experience. Everyone in the community is a learner, and at different times everyone is an educator. The process of community education then becomes one of matching learning needs within the community with all resources. Education should be based on the needs and problems of those for whom it is planned. There are many groups and individuals involved in the education process, and every community has an abundance of untapped educational resources (Minzey & LeTarte, 1994, pp. 40-42).

Interdependence

No one in modern society is completely independent: We live in a state of mutual interdependence. The dependence of disabled people therefore is not a feature which marks them out as different in kind from the rest of the population, but different in degree (Oliver, 1990; as cited in Carnaby, 1998):

> We have scurried to the opposite end of the continuum to advocate the strive to independence, when even the most so-called independent people without intellectual disabilities have areas of their lives in which they have needs and dependencies. (p. 221)
>
> The possibility of people with intellectual disability having the capacity to support people without a disability in certain aspects of life is also ignored. Social integration can perhaps better be achieved through a further form of integration: the weaving together of independence and interdependence as valued approaches. (p. 227)

Western Canada Protocol

This refers to a curriculum alignment strategy undertaken collaboratively by the three western Canadian provinces to encourage consistency in education.

NAIT

The Northern Alberta Institute of technology is a postsecondary education institution located in north central Alberta.

DeVry

DeVry is a postsecondary education institution with various campus locations.

Research Questions

This study was designed to explore "What exists as citizenship and transition education for educable mentally handicapped students attending secondary schools?" and "How does what exists as citizenship and transition education address the contemporary issues of these youth as identified by study informants and the research literature?"

Case Study in Research

Case study is useful in presenting basic information about areas of education in which little research has been conducted (Merriam, 1998). Barrington (1995), author of the provincial study *Supporting Integration*, frequently ~~referred to~~ the need for further study in the area of life skills (potentially citizenship and transition education) for developmentally disabled secondary students in Alberta. In addition, the inclusion in this study of data regarding secondary students with developmental disabilities who become pregnant is an area in which little educational research has been conducted (Llewellyn, 1997, 1998). Opportunities were purposively included for the professional educator and community health nurse informants to consider these youth through the design of the interview questions and the survey questionnaire.

Through case study it was possible to investigate complex real-life settings to offer insights and illuminations to readers that might enhance their understandings and encourage further experiences. In this case study, observations of the learning environment in its natural setting were recorded. Questionnaire and interview queries highlighted a number of social, economic, and overall wellness factors of concern to families with youth who could benefit from citizenship and transition education. The study is intended to advance the field's knowledge base and inform the programming offered for secondary students with developmental disabilities in Alberta high schools.

Concerns About the Use of Case Study Method

Case study sets out "to help us to understand processes of events, projects, and programs" (Sanders, 1981; as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 32). By selecting case study, holistic description is potentially a strength, but at the same time may be viewed as a limitation. Much depends on the nature of the problem being investigated and a careful measure of the method's benefits against its limitations. Riley (1963; as cited in Merriam, 1998) indicated that "qualitative studies are limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator" (p. 33). Guba and Lincoln (1981; as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 33) warned of exaggeration leading to erroneous conclusions. Ongoing, personal reflexive consideration of the data combined with communication with the research supervisor were two strategies used by the researcher to address these potential limitations. There is the potential for readers to believe that case studies are accounts of the whole rather than a mere slice. Indeed, as a solo research endeavor, this case study is a mere snapshot.

Further, any research that threatens to reveal discrepancies in practice creates dissonance that can be of both a personal and political nature. Guba and Lincoln (1981; as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 34) unequivocally expressed concern about the ethics of interpretive case study. Once again, ongoing consultation with the research supervisor during data collection and the data analysis process was maintained. This vigilant and inquiring consideration and reconsideration of the data in relation to identified presuppositions became a rich and rewarding experience that addresses these cautions. Finally, not only authors, but also readers of case studies must be aware of their own preconceptions.

Site Selection

In keeping with many critical theory researchers, purposive site selection was employed to the greatest degree possible. The secondary schools where access was granted have educable mentally handicapped students in attendance. The research site schools offered a range of programs intended to meet the educational requirements of a diverse student population. One site was a satellite program created by a special education school of choice. The satellite program was desirable because students could attend their neighborhood school rather than be transported to the magnet site across the city. Additionally, some parents and students preferred the option of a more integrated setting. This triad of stakeholders made the study particularly unique and, at the same time, more complex. In effect, the study involved three school sites. The sites are identified in the writing as Northern Turnpike: Satellite, Northern Turnpike: Magnet, and Southern Turnpike.

Data Sources

The research involved the following participants from Within Cinderella's Circle: (a) nine professional educators (three key teachers, four leadership staff, two school counselors), and (b) the parent (mother) and guardian (stepfather) of one female EMH Grade 10 student. Those who were involved Beyond the Castle Walls included the following: (a) one former school resource officer with considerable relevant experience, (b) two community health nurses involved in health promotion for adolescents with developmental disabilities, and (c) one senior legal counsel who has worked with adolescents with developmental disabilities through the Young Offenders Legal Aid Unit and teaches a related university course.

Collected with permission for interpretation were artifacts which included student-produced collages, student course schedules, an excerpt from one site administrator's speech delivered at the graduation ceremony, and the research site program guides. Student collages are described textually in the data results in Chapter IV. The research site program guides were considered through document analysis in Chapters VII and VIII, which form the discussion chapters of the thesis. Class-activity photographs and displayed student course schedules were studied on site when temporary membership within the classroom learning environment was experienced, in order to develop an understanding of the setting.

Furthermore, several documents were reviewed. These included two federal documents: *Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities: The Will to Act* (Government of Canada, 1996) and *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* (HRDC, 1998); as well as several provincial documents: *Integrated Occupations Program: Teachers' Guide* (Alberta Education, 1992); *Partners During Changing Times: An Information Booklet for Parents of Children With Special Needs* (Alberta Education, 1996); *Meeting the Challenge IV: Detailed Three Year Plan for Education in Alberta* (Alberta Education, 1997a); *Report on the Blue Ribbon Panel on Special Education* (Alberta Education, 1997b); *First things First: Our Children: Agenda for Opportunity* (Alberta Education, 1998); *Supporting Integration: Work in Progress in Alberta* (Barrington, 1995); and *In the Balance: Meeting: Special Needs Within Public Education: Task Force Findings and Recommendations* (ASBA, 1997). The final document reviewed was regional: *School District Attitude Satisfaction Survey Results for Opportunity Parents 1987-1997* (Edmonton Public Schools, 1997).

On Student Voice

"How does one acquire a story? The culture in which one is born already has an image of time, of the self, of heroism, of ambition, of fulfilment" (Novak, 1978, p. 49). This statement liberates the expression of the researcher's sense of respect and appreciation for the courage and potential of secondary students with developmental disabilities. Research observations of these students' educational experiences, peer relationships, and interactions with members of various community publics speak to a notion of openness, an emphasis on interdependence rather than the limiting dominant theories of individualization and marginalization of the Other (Goodman, 1992; as cited in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1996).

"A story does not merely connect action to action. It also recounts a struggle. It is *agon* (Gr., contest, struggle—the root of "agony") that stirs the deepest primitive emotions of our souls. Life, when it is life, is struggle" (Novak, 1978, p. 53). The literature has suggested that a number of contemporary life challenges (struggles) are faced by persons with developmental disabilities. Particularly in the last five years, provincial emphasis has been placed on quantitative measurements of academic achievement as a way of monitoring the accountability and fiscal responsibility of those involved in delivering public education. As a result, have the learning needs and potential contributions of certain special needs students been overlooked in recent years? There is a concern that a focus on the achievement of the academically able, especially in terms of linking quantitative test results to funding dollars for individual schools, will have an impact on citizens who have developmental disabilities, both during their years of school attendance and beyond into adulthood (Sobsey, 1999).

In the research student voices were expressed indirectly through the anecdotes, views, and lived experiences of the interview informants; specifically, professional educators (teachers, administrators, and counselors), parents, a health care nurse, a senior legal counsel, and a law enforcement officer.

> One of the functions of story is to draw our attention to a type of analytic capacity that has so far lain largely dormant in our philosophical tradition. The use of story is not to weaken our employment of intelligence, but on the contrary, to extend it into places we don't usually take it. Its point is to enlarge our capacity to understand and to talk about our actions and our values. (Novak, 1978, p. 63)

In prior pilot research interview work with educable mentally handicapped students, I found it difficult to avoid "leading responses." Following are documented responses offered by individual educable mentally handicapped students as their Citizenship and Transition Education Curricular Wish List (Nobes, 1997, pp. 33-36). *TSP* in these samples stands for *transition support program*.

Boy age 17, Year 11

My wish list for tsp
    how to fix things ised of breaking things like a sterial
    I would like to learn copute
    I would like to learn how to typ [sic]

Girl age 18, Year 12

My tsp wish list is
    working in a kindergars class
    I would like to go to gant mugnt coget
    and I like to enjoy kids I work at the leding ege prom [sic]

Girl age 16, Year 11

My tsp wish list
    cheerleading
    track team
    baseball team
    soccer team
    beauty culture
    harder academics for seniors
    Dance Team [sic]

Girl age 16, Year 11

    childcare
    foods
    look for jobs
    cheerleaders
    work study in the world
    looked for some to lived [sic]

Therefore, I acknowledge that involving student informants is of value to expand the research in this area, but they do not constitute part of this study for reasons previously discussed.

Questionnaire Design, Checklist, and Interview Questions

The genesis of the questionnaires and the checklist was largely the findings that emerged from the analysis of informal surveys of relevant students, parents, and professional educators gathered during previous research carried out by the writer, as well as a review of the literature. The questionnaires were designed as efficient forms of relevant data collection. They were given to the eight professional educators at the sites, along with a checklist related to curriculum content.

The interview questions were purposively designed to correspond to the two initial research questions, keeping in mind that in case study research the original questions may be reformulated as the process unfolds (Yin, 1989). Interviews took a conversational tone in part because the interviewees had the questions ahead of time and chose the order in which they preferred to answer (Hewitson, 1998). Individuals were fully informed about the content of the interview. Parents/guardians of relevant students were identified by the counselor or key teacher at each site and invited to complete a questionnaire. These parents were asked to participate in a personal interview. Although two sets of parents contacted at both schools consented to an interview, only one couple was interviewed. The second couple was not at home at the mutually agreed upon interview time and did not respond to researcher follow-up requests for a return telephone call.

All other informants were chosen based on their career involvement with EMH students. The community health nurses had been employed separately at the magnet school site on a full-time basis over the previous seven years. They participated in separate personal interviews, each held at their current places of employment. The resource officer consulted had extensive experience working with EMH students, once again through employment at the magnet school site over the previous seven years. This informant chose to provide written responses to the interview questions rather than to participate in a taped interview. The senior legal counsel interviewed in the home of the researcher was actively involved with young offenders and taught a related university course.

With the participants' written permission, the interviews were audiotaped and later transcribed. The Professional Educator Questionnaire and the informant interview questions are included as Appendix A, and a copy of the Curriculum Checklist is included as Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994; as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a, p. 180) indicated that data analysis contains three subprocesses: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The authors suggested that these processes occur before data collection, during study design, during data collection, and after data collection. Data reduction involved an acknowledgement of (a) the conceptual framework, (b) the research design including each site, (c) the questionnaire responses, and (d) approaches to data collection such as on-site observation. After collecting field notes, observations, documents, and artifacts and carrying out interviews, data summaries, coding, and the identification of themes and stories began. Data display involved the organized assembly of information that led to the formation of conclusions. These focused presentations of data include narratives and anecdotes (Van Manen, 1998).

In the instance of this research, data display allowed for a reduction of material, which assisted in thinking about its meanings. Gherardi and Turner (1987; as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a, p. 181) indicated that in these ways "data transformation" can be facilitated as information is condensed, clustered, and linked over the study duration. The use of large scrapbooks and a cut-and-paste, hands-on method of organizing relevant data was very helpful. The outcome was a framework for coherent presentation to others.

After a journey through a difficult process of condensation and varied presentations of material (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), the writing of this dissertation began.

Some of the approaches employed in conclusion drawing and verification included the identification of differences and similarities among schools, noting of patterns or themes and resultant triangulation of data sources, and follow-up with informants regarding analysis of data. For example, the key teacher at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite was telephoned twice (member checks: Merriam, 1998) in order for the researcher to feel comfortable about the interpretation of interview data and curriculum checklist responses given.

Validity

Validity and trustworthiness were ensured by conducting the investigation in an ethical manner (Merriam, 1998, p. 198). However, three basic strategies were used to enhance the validity of this case study research. One of these strategies was triangulation of data derived from various sources, including artifact and document analysis. Denzin (1989a, 1989b), Fielding and Fielding (1986), and Flick (1992; all as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, p. 4) suggested that triangulation offers an alternative to validation and that a combination of multiple methods, empirical materials, and perspectives adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation. Second, anecdotal expressions of experience were invited, to be completed in either a textual or an oral format. Third, the research literature was consulted, and field notes and observations were recorded. By applying these research practices, trustworthiness and validity were established by "pooled judgment" (Foreman, 1948; as cited in Merriam, 1998 p. 204).

Pragmatic validation rests upon observations and interpretations with a commitment to act (Kvale, 1995, p. 33). Such validation tends to focus on the relevance of interpretations to instigate change. Establishing a connection to the reader is best accomplished by using exemplars, anecdotes, metaphors, case stories, and interview narratives. These were integral to the data collection and added strength to this final presentation. The contribution of these exemplars, anecdotes, metaphors, or narratives may be tested by their impact on educational practice (Mishler, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1992; as cited in Kvale, 1995, p. 33).

At a particularly lonely time of the writing process, the researcher, seeking feedback, shared a version of the chapter "Fairy Godmother as Listener" with a co-worker who has a daughter with a developmental disability. The daughter attended secondary school and managed to achieve a Grade 12 diploma. The young woman went on to secure an evening stock clerk position at a major retailer. The response received regarding the inclusion of parents' views and experiences was both appreciative and powerful.

Peer examination through continuing close communication with the university supervisor led to the formulation of this research and provided opportunities for confidential consideration of the findings. For example, sensitive issues around sexual abuse or judgements made by informants regarding perceived controversies such as income supports for persons with disabilities required delicate handling. Acknowledgement that "there are no objective observations, only observations that are situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998a, p. 12) was important to this work.

Generalizability of Data

This research describes what existed as citizenship and transition education provided to secondary EMH students in specific sites and was not intended to isolate laws of human behavior in these educational circumstances. Special education funding in Alberta requires that an individual program plan (IPP) be in place for each student meeting the criteria for financial support above the basic allowed per-pupil grant. Each IPP, then, will be specific to the needs of individual students; therefore, programs, approaches, and learning opportunities do vary on a site-by-site and per-pupil basis. Therefore, generalizability may depend on support from the literature and the consideration of previous provincial studies.

Ethical Considerations

Conducting research in a school community required vigilant attention to the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Informants trusted the researcher to honor a moral obligation to them, ensuring that they would not be hurt by their involvement. A "comfort zone" was established before beginning interviews, encouraged by prior visits for observation and the collection of field notes, once access was granted. Sharing information about being a fellow educational practitioner and the parent of a youth with special learning needs eased the path to open, authentic communication with informants. This was most evident in the depth and length of the parent interview as well as the interview with the teacher at Northern Turnpike: Satellite.

Potential participants were informed about the nature and purpose of the research by a letter of explanation and informed consent forms. The letter served to invite voluntary participation and included a telephone contact for potential participants who had questions. Participants were advised of their right to withdraw from the research at any time and have their data removed from the project. Participants signed an informed consent document prior to involvement in the research.

All comments and responses were confidential, and participant/site confidentiality was assured from the outset. Only the researcher and the university supervisor had access to the observations, questionnaires, audiotapes, and written transcripts.

The request for an anecdote as a conclusion to the interview was made well in advance so that the informants could contemplate their decision to contribute. The request was accompanied with a choice to provide a written text or a taped, oral telling. Participants were made aware that they could ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any time during the data collection and that they had the right to request that certain information be considered "off the record." In the interest of clarity, a request was made to return to individual participants to verify their data. In the event that participant needs for information arose out of the interviews, there was a contact list of agencies that offered support.

Audiotapes, transcribed materials, and questionnaires will be kept in locked storage until five years after the completion of the study, at which time they will be destroyed. This study was approved by the University of Alberta's Department of Secondary Education Ethics Review Committee and supported by the Cooperative Activities Program.

Significance of the Research

Specifically, this case study research is intended to (a) evoke an awareness on the part of instructional leaders of the presence and requirements of EMH students in secondary schools, (b) influence program development that is in alignment with the literature on issues faced by EMH students, and (c) encourage policy development regarding the citizenship and transition education of other secondary students more generally considered at risk (disadvantaged).

In terms of the curriculum field, the outcome of the research as influenced by critical theory might be that collaboratively decided changes will be forthcoming in the secondary education experiences of EMH youth. The need for secondary citizenship and transition education which emphasizes community experiences and participation, the development of resilience, a sense of personal and family empowerment, and self-advocacy has been documented (Dempsey, 1996; Lamorey & Leigh, 1996; Stowitschek et al., 1999). Lichtenstein (1996) stated that school is where most young people gain firsthand knowledge that will assist them in the larger community. Yet, for special needs students, noted quality of life researchers Brown and Timmons (1994) wrote that instruction "is often directed at keeping individuals quiet rather than encouraging them to develop assertion and exploration of the environment" (p. 5).

In the vision paper *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* (HRDC, 1998), the federal, provincial, and territorial Social Services ministers indicated the likelihood of limitations being placed on income support programs for persons with barriers to employment, such as those with intellectual/developmental disabilities, while acknowledging the ongoing existence of those barriers. Ministers of Social Services are requiring a coordinated approach to ensure effective policies and programs for Canadians with disabilities. Among those included in this coordinated approach are the "ministers responsible for health, labor, employment, education, training, learning, finance, aboriginal affairs, women, justice, housing, transportation, Worker's Compensation, and citizenship" (p. 6). The report noted that it is vital that education embrace the notion of "full citizenship" preparation, including employment, further training, and self-determination, in order to meet the vision outlined by the federal government.

Limitations of the Research

As the title indicates, this study was concerned with documenting citizenship and transition education opportunities for EMH students attending two secondary schools and one combined junior-senior high special education school of choice. There were factors beyond the researcher's influence such as site access, response of participants, and ongoing prescheduled school operations such as involvement in special events and examinations. Other limitations included parent/guardians' or professional educators' willingness to participate.

The pressures of year end felt by professional educators and low student attendance were somewhat limiting factors. Finally, I hoped for interviews with parents/guardians of both female and male students with equal representation. However, I was fortunate to meet for an entire afternoon with the parents of one female Grade 10 student and very much appreciated their sincerity and commitment to the study.

Delimitations by the Researcher

This study does not examine the history of special education practice in Canada or Alberta. With the federal government's vision paper *In Unison* (HRDC, 1998) driving the national scene in terms of legislation and approaches to citizenship, income supports, training, and employment for EMH youth, the time seemed right to examine just where secondary schools fall in terms of preparing students to move into such an all-inclusive society. The study was approached as a potential curriculum invitation for secondary professional educators, rather than as an issue or problem to be solved solely within the divisions of educational psychology and educational pedagogy. After all, in public education, schools must strive to meet the learning needs of all students and to include all students in democratic learning communities.

Informant selection was intended so that the contemporary issues identified in the literature were addressed by the best accessible expertise. These expert informants addressed issues of health including substance, physical, or sexual abuse; reproductive health; marginalization; limited income; involvement with law enforcement; and at-risk behaviors. Variables included in the questionnaire and interview questions focussed on gathering data specifically to respond to the research questions.

Research Story Unfolding

The study consists of nine chapters and a three-part appendix. Researcher voice and literature sources are interspersed throughout. Chapter I introduces the research. Chapter II features the journey into the research and is entitled "Teacher As Fairy Godmother." Chapter III, "So What's the Story . . . At Your School?" presents the findings from interviews with professional educators regarding what exists in their schools as citizenship education. Chapter IV, "Fairy Godmother as Observer," describes the study settings and introduces student collages as artifacts. Chapter V, "Fairy Godmother as Listener," sees gossamer wings of Omniscience shed in order to provide space for the wisdom of parent/guardian voices. Chapter VI, "Fairy Godmother as Muse," includes the findings particularly focussed on informants' views regarding contemporary issues facing EMH youth and barriers to citizenship education in secondary schools. Fairy Godmother offers informants a treasured wish, with responses forming the conclusion of the chapter. Chapter VII is entitled "Between the Lines of Cinderella's Story: Document and Artifact Analysis." This chapter presents findings from the review of federal, provincial, regional, and site-accessed materials. Finally, the research questions are responded to in Chapter VIII, "Discussion of Findings and Concluding Themes," and recommendations which consider a variety of stakeholders form Chapter IX. Appendix A includes the Professional Educator Questionnaire and the informant interview questions; Appendix B is comprised of a Curriculum Checklist; and Appendix C, which features Promising Approaches to Citizenship and Transition Education, emphasizes active living, relationship building, and gender considerations.

CHAPTER II

TEACHER AS FAIRY GODMOTHER

Introduction

Through the researcher's story, complemented by the literature, this chapter invites the reader into the world of Fairy Godmother and establishes the genesis of the study.

Circa 1992

I accepted a position as the sole horticulture teacher in what *I* called a *special education school of choice*. Within the district there prevailed a mysterious Discourse (Sawada, 1998) which made our school segregated, whereas the other high schools with a focus such as visual arts, sports, ballet, or science and technology were referred to as *programs of choice*. There were criteria for acceptance as well as a curricular emphasis, yet the others were not considered segregated sites. I puzzled over this and chose my words carefully when I explained where I was employed. I perceived a negative connotation associated with our school.

As the horticulture teacher, I facilitated experiences integrating academic competencies, trade skills, and social communication on a daily basis. With a schoolbus drivers' license, I could take my classes out in the school-owned vehicles for relevant community-based learning—experiential epistemology (Dewey, 1938; as cited in Knight, 1989). We moved beyond our borders and into the school district, teaching children (and colleagues) about more than just plants through a Travelling Greenhouse Schoolbus Project (Nobes, 1999). The students were proud and valued in learning communities beyond their school of choice. "Schools, as venues of hope, can become sites of resistance and democratic possibility through concerted efforts of teachers and students to work within a liberatory framework" (Giroux, 1988; as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, p. 262). Giroux further stated that schools can teach the knowledge, values, and social relations that can educate young people for empowerment rather than subjugation.

An avid extracurricular activity sponsor, I established relationships with students across grade levels and disabilities and managed to involve high numbers of enthusiastic youth in various school clubs. Through these experiences I became more informed about the challenges faced by youth as a result of various disabilities and difficult life circumstances.

The Plot Thickens . . . Circa 1996

Eventually I accepted an opportunity to work with graduates of the special education school of choice in an off-campus location. Collaboratively, a transition program was designed for and with families and young adults on the journey between secondary student and adult community member. My role might be considered, as Knight (1989) would say, that of a more experienced fellow traveler. I set about guiding this important process through natural daily experiences of problem solving (Knight, 1989; Llewellyn, 1997; Stowitschek et al., 1999).

It was in severing ties to the main-campus location that I was made acutely aware of the benefits of learning experiences specifically linked to citizenship, transition, and contemporary life. The students in the group were all receiving (or upon reaching the age of 18, applied to receive) Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH). This income was allotted after lengthy physical and psychological assessments and screening interviews. Accompanying each cheque was the stigma of being considered unemployable.

Viewed through an opaque lens, one might consider the transition students as somewhat reluctant and tentative Cinderellas; however, I cringe at the thought of accepting the role of Omniscient Fairy Godmother—teacher as all knowing.

Like the Cinderella pseudo character, some of my students received occasional glimpses of a participative life but had never really experienced much, other than yellow-bus rides to and from school, activities planned for them through school, and television viewing at home. This finding was supported in surveys done with students and families in my previous research (Nobes, 1997). Although overall demonstrating a range of competencies, there were gaps in each of their individual preparations for post high school experiences. After identifying respective areas of need, we set out to remedy these as soon as possible. The most significant of these gaps were:

- Mobility: The students had not learned to use public transit.
- Information access: The students did not have telephone skills, library cards, or newspaper literacy; and their media literacy was limited.
- Personal safety: The students were unaware of strategies to ensure as completely as possible their own safety while out in the community or at home alone.
- Civics: The students had no knowledge of government at the municipal, provincial, or national level.
- Recreation: The students were not involved in accessing community recreation resources, likely due to the mobility issue and personal safety concerns.
- Self-awareness: The students did not know their clothing size or how to shop and choose clothing for themselves; some had poor personal hygiene.
- Self-determination: The students were not accustomed to goal setting, decision making, and planning (some had never ordered their own meal in a fast-food restaurant).
- Finances: Most students did not have their own bank accounts or an awareness of bank use, and financial resources were controlled by parents and guardians (AISH, insurance settlements).
- Social skills: The students were weak in the area of communicating with others (body language, manners, appropriateness of time and place).

In looking ahead to the curriculum for the time that we would be together, I proposed to parents and students that we meet on a per-family basis to discuss goals, hopes, and dreams for the transition experience. Most of these meetings took place in students' homes, a privilege I still treasure. Not all parents wanted to meet to discuss the future, and these same parents balked at transit training. However, they were reluctant to secure a more closely supervised setting for their young-adult offspring than our program was intended to structure.

I was left to ponder whether we as students, parents, and teacher had learned over the years how to do Disability in our various roles. Could we, or were we willing to, unlearn this—or at least learn to do Disability in the context of wider experience? And what about the six-hour retarded child (Winzer, 1994, p. 162), in fact truly disabled only while negotiating the classroom Discourse.

> Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes. A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instruction on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize. (Gee, 1996, p. 127; as cited in Ebbers, 1998, p. 25)

I resolved not to be a caretaker. I would endeavor to care about the students, but not for them. In my naivete I believed that I knew the right educational trail to take: Provide learning opportunities to develop adaptive behaviors (Grossman, 1977; as cited in Winzer, 1994, p. 152). In retrospect, did I really believe that this plot line would move the students towards the turnpike linked to the Prince's ball? Critical emancipatory theory became a guide for my research.

> Critical researchers understand that individual identity and human agency form such a chaotic knot of intertwined articulations that no social theorist can ever completely disentangle them. Without such a cautionary stance, any critical theory is vulnerable to the rationalistic tendency to develop a road map to a "logical future," a direct turnpike to the Emerald City of emancipation. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, pp. 276-277)

Situated on the top floor of an aging surplus school building, we were moved from a well-equipped and familiar school community to a facility with hot, dark drinking water sourced from ancient corroded pipes. The entrance stairwell greeted visitors with an unpleasant odor. But certainly this was not the squalor of Cinderella's infamous scullery. The main floor accommodated the offices and operations of an immigrant services organization. "A critical theory reconceptualized by poststructuralism and feminism promotes a politics of difference that refuses to pathologize or exoticize the Other" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 275). So there we were (two forms of the Other sharing designated spaces.

In our classroom a beautiful bank of sunny windows made up for various other structural and situational oddities. It was not our intent to spend much time in the building anyway. "It's the program—you—not the facility that's important." Such was the administrative wisdom from our colonial campus roots. I can now see the true value that we pioneers were to have for our parent school.

There were no computers for resume preparation, no fax machine or photocopier. Instead of lamenting this lack of technology, we all purchased adult bus passes and became tourists in our own hometown. Before setting out on the transit routes alone, we learned personal self-defense techniques from our school resource officer. Together we weathered the transit-training glitches and managed to move along on the journey to increased self-determination. Interactive visits were arranged to Medicentres, banks, and the employment centers. Consumer skills were developed through decision-making opportunities that involved budgeting for recreation and leisure. Communication in a variety of situations was rehearsed and then carried out as telephone etiquette and requests for information or customer service came into play. After years of crazed Saturday shopping (after all, I was employable), I was amazed to see who frequented the malls on weekdays. Senior citizens, women with babies and preschoolers, and the visibly disabled made up the consumer polls on any midweek shopping day.

In a few months we were relocated from the pungent building. We rented a room in a more modern—and more populated—school and enjoyed better access to washrooms, photocopiers, and fax machines. The essentials of citizenship and transition education? Hardly, but helpful to our purpose just the same. Colleagues applauded at staff meetings held at the main campus as I recounted the students' trail-blazing experiences, especially those involving community volunteer work.

However, the year was not without challenges. This transition process was a tough one for the families and the students, many of whom had attended versions of closely supervised school programs since toddlerhood. I admit to puzzled reflection regarding what seemed to be the outcome of those years of education. "Think practical thoughts" was my perfect mantra from moment to experiential moment during these sometimes trying days.

Aspects of daily life that I took for granted were a struggle for certain students, especially on a seasonal basis. An example is the severe winter climate. Those with cerebral palsy had a tough time negotiating the ice and snow on streets, sidewalks, and parking lots and at bus stops. Still other students were so accustomed to the secondary-school, yellow-bus, door-to-door transportation service that they did not know how to dress for safety and comfort in bad weather conditions, learning instead through chilly "reflective thought" (Knight, 1989).

Further everyday difficulties included ineffective telephone communication, especially when requesting transit information. Service providers spoke more quickly than students could print, resulting in missed instructions. We repeated a role play asking the transit advisor to speak more slowly from the outset of the conversation, solving this wrinkle. It took a long time for some students to muster the courage to ask clerks for assistance in stores or to order food for lunches out. Supportive coaching and, most important, opportunities to try brought about increased confidence and competence on an individual basis.

Through St. Johns we attained First Aid Certificates, learning alongside other adults from the community and, in some cases, having the exam read aloud. In order to find pleasant places of interest to visit, much like employment, we formed a partnership with the local Volunteer Center. We sought a routine, a place to be needed, a destination where we were known and welcomed by others (the embodiment of Sagor's [1996, p. 39] potency, usefulness, competence, and belonging, leading to enhanced resilience). The managers of volunteers welcomed us regardless, unlike some of our co-volunteers who complained about one student's social competency.

> Traditional notions of community often privilege unity over Diversity. . . . This communitarian dream as politically disabling because of the suppression of race, class, and gender differences . . . and the exclusion of marginalized groups whom community members are loathe to engage. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, p. 275)

Other negative reactions came from some parents of the students, who were less than supportive of this "working for free." Our service education days were a lesson in citizenship for many individuals (Nobes, 1998a).

Pretty much out of the economic food chain because of limited financial resources and excluded from the exalted employment market, were we still destined to do Disability beyond the confines of the six-hour classroom? In the spring I suggested that the students telephone the local Youth Employment Centre to reserve individual seats at a regularly scheduled job-search workshop. The students made their individual calls, and I set about making my own reservation. I indicated that I was a teacher, named my school, and requested the opportunity to attend the workshop. Within days I received a phone call from the Youth Employment Centre's staff, suggesting that I might prefer to have a separate workshop for my group. I declined the opportunity but expressed appreciation for what I expected was a choice, indicating that we would be arriving on an independent basis to join other youth for the session. I was very proud of my students, who traveled solo on the transit system and arrived punctually.

Initially, we were to chat a few moments with our table neighbor and then introduce the person to the rest of the group. Each of my students did a very nice job of introducing their seatmates. All participants were then to indicate what sort of employment they were seeking. The youth expressed interest in service jobs and music stores, and one hoped to work as a telemarketer. The lone exception was a young fellow who had completed one year at DeVry Institute. A female participant, not from our group, announced to the table group that she was pregnant and had been kicked out of her parents' home, so she really needed to find a job. One of my students stood out by indicating that he "wanted a job doing magic."

It was shortly after these illuminating introductions took place that a staff member entered the room and quietly asked me to leave the session. I was led down a hall and invited to sit in an office. To my surprise, I was told that my students had "no right" to receive this "special treatment," and how did I think the other youth felt? As I could not discern much difference between the youths attending the session and my students, I was particularly dismayed. I was told that the students needed a Grade 9 reading level to attend the session; having worked with marginalized students for most of my career, I wondered to myself how many youth who are out of school and looking for work had a Grade 9 reading level. At any rate, after what I experienced as a lambasting, I was freed to return to the session. All of the workshop participants required assistance with the job-search workbook, including the DeVry attendee, so I marveled at the reading level requirement.

As we traveled together on transit after the morning's experience, my students expressed very much appreciation for attending the session with their age peers. I later telephoned Gary McPherson, who was then the Chairperson of the Premier's Council on Citizens with Disabilities, to relate our experience. He indicated that this warranted some further exploration by his staff, and eventually I received a response from a supervisory person at the Youth Employment Centre. It was stated that our school had "always" had separate sessions. Once again, I replied that I appreciated knowing that there was a choice.

It was election year, so we intentionally learned more about citizenship and transition and democracy by meeting our program location MLA and competing candidates. We also toured the Legislature and City Hall. During this time we set up a weekly Breakfast Bowling League. We met occasionally with students still attending our parent school, tempting them to share our increasing world competencies. In order to maintain regular contact with each other as some students moved towards leaving the proverbial transition support nest, the Breakfast Bowling League was a valuable place of belonging, acceptance, and relationship (Angus, 1993; as cited in Hewitson, 1998, p. 85). Had we finally begun to learn the complex steps necessary to enjoy a twirl at the Prince's ball?

With increased confidence, some of the students and families made choices that led to college attendance. For some, this necessitated a move away from the once unfamiliar city. In life's mysterious circles, students applied to the same college programs in which my teaching career began almost 15 years earlier.

Still other students ceased joining our activities and chose to remain at home, discontinuing their job search, community volunteerism, and the Breakfast Bowling League. At that point, after sharing months of various community-based learning experiences, I accepted that staying at home could become an informed decision.

> Quality of life for persons with intellectual disability encourages a broad framework associated with human rights, variability, and individual choice. It is defined in terms of cultural standards and norms and with consideration of the needs, experiences and desires of individuals. (Brown & Timmons, 1994; as cited in Nobes, 1997, p. 4)

Is It Okay to Decline to Attend the Prince's Ball?

I was tired of feeling out of step with school-based colleagues in my teaching position as I facilitated community-based citizenship and transition experiences. I experienced confusion and disappointment when colleagues at another secondary school removed our school's contribution to a shared display aimed at making parents aware of different district programs. The unsettled feeling persisted when a newspaper article and colored photo of our EMH students working with the other high school students in a special transition project were withheld from publication by the administration of the host school. Although it was satisfactory for our students to be in the host building for certain useful maintenance purposes, much akin to Cinderella's labors, the publicity that could cause parents to seek out the high school to register a teen with special needs was not desired. After costly technology-related renovations to the building and the relinquishment of well-equipped vocational programs, the intent was to attract the best and the brightest academic students.

Aware as I was of the program limitations present when I first started teaching at the EMH school of choice, I was curious to learn more about the philosophies of other secondary school leaders. This I felt could be accomplished by joining a cohort program offered in curriculum studies by the Department of Secondary Education.

Research Questions Maintain Relevance

These prior experiences, among others, left two nagging questions that are the foundation of this research. The questions are responded to in Chapters III, IV, and V; and a further discussion of themes is presented in Chapter VIII.

1. What exists as citizenship and transition education for educable mentally handicapped students attending secondary schools?

2. How does what exists as citizenship and transition education address the contemporary issues of these youth, as identified by study informants and the research literature?

In completing this study, I wished to produce a document that would be meaningful and engaging to practitioners and curriculum leaders active in the education profession; for example, those at the secondary school administrative level. In engaging front-line staff, I hoped for an eventual impact at the policy development level. Finally, Pinar et al. (1996, p. 9) indicated that the educational possibility for curriculum theory is to help an individual reflect more profoundly on his or her specific situation. Was I also seeking peace of mind about my practice?

One interpretive approach guided this research and assisted in the data analysis; it was the critical emancipatory paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, pp. 26-28). It was the logic of the social text encountered in my professional practice that created personal discomfort and drove the pursuit of this research. A critical-emancipatory view with the research meant that data collected would be discussed in terms of their emancipatory implications or from a materialist-realist ontology. In other words, the real world makes a material difference in terms of race, gender, class, and, equally important in terms of this research experience, developmental disability.

Fast-Forward to the High School Experience . . . Circa 1999

I was compelled to find out what was available as citizenship and transition education for educable mentally handicapped students attending other secondary schools. My application for research access was granted by the public school district office, and I received the green light to travel to two different schools—at opposite ends of the city. Both had populations of approximately 1,100 students, and both welcomed students from a range of ethnicities and socioeconomic strata, and with varying enthusiasms regarding school attendance.

At one site, the Southern Turnpike guidance counselor scrolled up only seven educable mentally handicapped, fully integrated student registrations on the computer screen. The other school, Northern Turnpike Satellite, offered separate classroom space and integrated learning opportunities to a much larger group of EMH students residing in the neighborhood. The third site, referred to as the Northern Turnpike: Magnet, was the special education school of choice for students aged 12 to 20 years. Less time was spent with on-site observations there because I had acquired a thorough knowledge of this school though previous experience.

CHAPTER III

SO WHAT'S THE STORY . . . AT YOUR SCHOOL?

Introduction

Prior to undertaking this study, I believed that despite federal textual protestations to the contrary, our society and certainly our secondary schools were not about to embrace persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities as fully as the document *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* (HRDC, 1998) suggested. And yet, if a process of citizenship and transition education was not occurring at the secondary school level, where and when would it take place? After all, former Alberta Learning Minister Gary Mar (1998) stated that our schools must offer educational preparation for life. What sorts of learning experiences would serve as the preparation for life of EMH students that could be provided in an academically focussed secondary school learning environment?

What Exists as Citizenship and Transition Education

The following chapter presents the findings from the interviews with professional educators describing what exists as citizenship and transition education in two of the study sites; that is, the Southern Turnpike and the Northern Turnpike: Satellite. The third site, Northern Turnpike: Magnet, is not mentioned as frequently in the chapter since the purpose of this research was to investigate approaches in other nonsegregated schools. As noted elsewhere, the researcher had extensive experience in the special education school of choice. Quotations are general overviews of what exists as citizenship and transition education in the sites.

What exists is synthesized under five topics, with supporting quotations from the professional educators. As well, relevant literature has been included. The topics are discussed in Chapter VIII.

A teacher at the Northern Turnpike site said the following about the program:

> There's supposed to be a cap on here of 15 students, and it's an integrated program, so the students do the lowest level of credit courses that are available in high schools. I work with them on math, English, and social; and I work with the Grade 11s on CALM 20 and with the math correspondence in the 14 to 24 levels. And what I do is, I go through their timetables and help them decide what they'll be able to handle outside the classroom [based on] their reading levels. There hasn't been [any sort of inservicing for receiving teachers].

This situation contradicts Barrington (1995), who indicated that inservicing (and extra preparation time) for educators involved in an integrated program delivery model is characteristic of effective inclusive best practice.

At the Northern Turnpike Magnet, the school's vision statement, in summary, is to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to lead meaningful lives. A separate Citizenship and Transition curriculum is offered. Finally, at the Southern Turnpike, students are fully integrated into academic classes.

Cold, Hard Cash: A Pot of Gold for Each Credit?

At each site, course selection occurs at the beginning of the first and second terms. The following quotations indicate that this process is tied to funding from Alberta Learning. For example, a teacher at the Northern Turnpike Satellite said:

> Because we have to pay for the courses, whatever course that I have the students enrolled in, I try to be as confident as possible that they're going to pass it, so I want to be pretty sure that they're going to be able to manage it.

The principal from the Northern Turnpike: Magnet, who administrates the satellite site, stated, " We just barely break even on that program." The program for this year at this site includes a full-time teacher, a full-time program aide, and 23 registered students receiving provincial per-pupil funding for educable mentally handicapped classroom support.

Similarly, the Southern Turnpike counselor said:

> I'd like there to be more money or more community support, because schools are under the restrictions of money basically. What is it that comes with an EMH student? It's something like thirty-five-hundred dollars, I think, extra that comes with an EMH student. It's not a lot of money, even for providing them the resources that they need.

Choosing a Program . . . When You Don't Exist

The school handbook in each site does not include any of the 16-level courses except when there is an ESL program, so I realized that the EMH students might feel somewhat invisible from the outset. They are not written up in the school handbook, but perhaps, instead, they could contribute to writing their own stories (in the form of an individual program plan—IPP)? An IPP is a mandatory requirement of Alberta Learning for each student identified as having special needs. It is meant to ensure the provision of appropriate programming for students with special needs. It lists the special education and related services that the school will provide for the child (Alberta Education, 1996, p. 4).

Students from each site returned the packages they were given, which included an information letter, Parent Guardian Demographic Survey, Parent/Guardian Interview Questions, and Informed Consent. One question in the survey was, "Were you involved in the writing of an individual program plan for your son or daughter this year?" Without exception, the response from the parents/guardians was "No."

> Fairy Godmother: Does that mean that they [the parents] didn't come into the school, or that there is no IPP ?

At the Southern Turnpike, the counselor said:

> That means there's no IPP. . . . Nobody does them. They have to be done, and we could get ourselves into a lot of trouble. But the bottom line is, I do what I have to do for the kids, but I don't do the IPPs. And again, that's something that's just dropped in my lap: "You do this." And it just doesn't get done. The work gets done, but the paperwork hasn't gotten done. And so is there an individual program? Yes, there is. Where is it? It's up here [taps head]. Honestly, that's the

> truth. I'm not proud of what's been going on in the last two years because, as I say, our principal has just cut counseling and cut counseling. Ever since he came here he's dropped us down from almost two full-time equivalents down to a little over one full-time equivalent, but the responsibilities have been added to at the same time that something's been taken away. So I am not nearly as excited about what I've done this year, and even last year, as before that.

What Does This Situation of Nonexistence Really Mean to a Student With Special Learning Needs?

At the Southern Turnpike, all of the EMH students were fully integrated, and they could attend an after-school study hall that was open to all students if they chose, as noted in the following quotation by the counselor: "We have a Homework Club that the ________ established here, and it was primarily for the students who are immigrants or children of immigrants, but anyone could attend and get assistance with homework."

Each of the EMH students was enrolled in general 14- and 24-level classes and career and technology studies course modules. The 16-level courses (the lowest academic level of high school credit courses available in the province) were identified in the school handbook as available to English as a second language (ESL) students.

Alternatively, at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite, the teacher informed me that:

> We do a lot of tutoring. __________ goes to a lot of classes with the students, so comes back here with them, and she continues working with them. So in a case like that, if they had another course where they had to complete something or do a test or whatever, they would kind of put aside our work. So again, it's more complex to finish our work.

The lowest-level credit courses in English, social, math, and, in Grade 11, the required CALM are all part of each student's program in addition to the classes in which they are integrated. This, plus science, is a typical course load for other secondary school students.

The Northern Turnpike: Magnet site offered limited high school credit earning opportunities. Individual Program Plans drive the curriculum experiences of the learners.

On Academics . . .

At the Northern Turnpike: Satellite the integrated academic courses are spread all over the building and all over the students' schedules. At the front of the class the bulletin board is plastered with timetables for each student. Some students have entire days marked Study Hall. This is the time during which they are in the classroom working on 16-level academic credit courses. On the blackboard is a complex chart of assignments to be completed by the students. This is a visual reminder of the requirements for success (meaning credits earned) that are a part of the academics taught in the segregated classroom. The chart assists students and staff to keep track of individual progress. In addition, the program aide keeps a weekly log of students who complete the regular Monday-morning-list spelling test on the Friday of that week. On some Fridays, while collecting data, I observed the test administered five different times as students came and went throughout the day.

My observations were supported by three responses the teacher made during our interview regarding homework. For example, initially the teacher commented:

> It's tough, because there's sometimes kids who get missed. So they're coming and going all day, which is tough sometimes for programming. And there'll be two or three different classes, in a sense, going on in one class at a time. So that means we're teaching things three or four times, which isn't that uncommon if you are teaching different classes. But to have to do that two or three times within each class, within each group, yes, that can be frustrating.

The teacher followed with a second response about homework: "They get tons of it. They have a lot of homework. The pace of work is really, really fast for these kids, for our kids. It is. They get blown away." When queried about the teacher's role with homework, the teacher responded as follows:

> We're trying. What I do is, I send a letter to all the teachers saying that these are our students and that if there's any problems or whatever, to contact me and I'll contact the family and do whatever is necessary to help the student. Usually by the end of the first semester I know for sure how they [the students] work.

> The first year I tried as much as I could to keep most of the students with me in the afternoon. But then they started getting into too many different types of courses, and you can see that they're able to be successful, so I am not going to hold them back. And they do the course like everyone else. The only thing is, I find on tests that our students will need extra support.

At the southern site I learned from the counselor's responses that, like the students attending the other school, the students here have as their goal the attainment of a high school diploma. The counselor noted:

> What I've found with a lot of these EMH kids is that the ones that have good work habits seem to be able to get a high school diploma. It takes them longer; they need that fourth year. Sometimes they even need a fifth year, but they somehow seem to be able to get it. It's the ones with the low ability plus the bad habits that aren't getting a high school diploma, and each year we have a few that are not able to. But we also have a comparable number that do manage to achieve it, so I don't know whether it's that the testing is really old, the testing that labeled them EMH is old and hasn't been updated, or whether they've just learned wonderful coping strategies.

Community-Based Citizenship and Transition Education

The findings indicate that students are not participating in the community as part of their school program at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite and the Southern Turnpike. The following quotations support this finding.

Southern Turnpike

> Fairy Godmother: Are there any community-based learning experiences that the EMH kids participate in aside from work experience?
>
> Counselor: Not in our school.
>
> Fairy Godmother: Is there service learning or volunteer kinds of things? Mentoring or seniors involved?
>
> Counselor: Not yet, no. That certainly is something I think we need to keep in mind, but it's not something we have done.

Northern Turnpike: Satellite

> Fairy Godmother: Are the EMH students in your school participating in the community as part of their program?
>
> Counselor: No, they aren't. I don't think we're ready to pursue that. Perhaps we could establish those relationships with less difficulty than we sometimes think.

The Northern Turnpike: Magnet offers community-based learning opportunities which include, among others, active living and leisure, off-campus work study, service learning, and a transition education experience offered separately from the school setting for students over the age of 18. These findings, as indicated elsewhere in this document, are the result of previous research and experience on the part of Fairy Godmother with the Magnet school.

Reflecting on What Exists

And so it seemed that the provincial focus on academics was flourishing in the high schools. Is this what citizenship and transition education for EMH students in secondary schools was all about? This is not what the literature on citizens with developmental disabilities indicated. For example, Sobsey (1994; as cited in Lamorey & Leigh, 1996) stressed that there is a need for students with developmental disabilities to receive basic training in personal empowerment, safety skills, individual rights education, social skills, assertiveness, sex education, communication skills, and self-defense. Dempsey (1996) stated that program delivery which is flexible and practical and truly meets the personal needs of individuals will be the most effective. Dempsey further suggested that programs should place an emphasis on the existing strengths of individuals rather than on their deficiencies. McConnell, Llewellyn, and Bye (1997) emphasized a development of empowerment and a familiarity with community resources. Minzey and LeTarte (1994) have written extensively in the area of community education and suggested a holistic approach:

> Community education is a concept which perceives education in a broad context, as any experience that helps you deal with another experience. Everyone in the community is a learner, and at different times, everyone is an educator. The process of community education then becomes one of matching learning needs within the community with all resources. . . .
>
> Education should be based on the needs and problems of those for whom it is planned. There are many groups and individuals involved in the education process, and every community has an abundance of untapped educational resources. (pp. 40-42)

When considering the students who are the focus of this research, it is important to keep in mind the sage words of one administrator from the Northern Turnpike: Magnet: "EMH is a range, so it depends on where they are in the range. But I can see that if I was going to use something [curricular] as a benchmark, it would be the IOP program."

Following the suggestion of the Integrated Occupations Program (IOP) by the administrator as the curriculum for EMH students, I reviewed the curriculum documents and related literature. The following paragraphs highlight the salient points of this review.

The IOP was developed for students who were funded as Adaptation students—a few points higher on the IQ scale than educable mentally handicapped youth (considered for funding as Opportunity students) and generally more competent readers and writers. Within the IOP program there was plenty of opportunity for community-based citizenship and transition education—at least if the curriculum was delivered as intended by the Teachers' Guide (Alberta Education, 1992).

I turned to Lynch (1992; as cited in Osler et al., 1995) and read that citizenship can be considered the demonstration of social responsibilities necessary for the development of a supportive community, inclusive of individuals and respectful of human rights. This definition could work for an entire secondary school, not just for one group of students. In fact, it could apply globally. I was still searching for another understanding, however, and turned to Giroux (1988):

> Citizenship education needs to be grounded in a public philosophy dedicated to uncovering sources of suffering and oppression, while legitimating social practices that uphold principles of sociality and community that are dedicated to the quality of human life. (p. 35)

Giroux (1988) provided an elusive *aha!* I thought about the quality-of-life research for adolescents with developmental disabilities carried out by Brown and Timmons (1994) and reread the vision paper published by the federal government, *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* (HRDC, 1998). Brown and Timmons included education, social learning, community living, leisure and recreation, and vocational development as essential components of a quality-of-life framework associated with human rights, variability, and individual choice for adolescents with developmental disabilities.

In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues (HRDC, 1998, p. 11) indicated that many Canadians with disabilities share common concerns, including personal, social, and economic disadvantages and barriers that prevent access to the same opportunities that other Canadians have. Persons with disabilities are more likely to have lower education levels and to be socially isolated and discriminated against in the workplace. These persons often face economic hardship in their daily lives, and many live below the poverty line. Further reflection along this storyline led me to challenge a school newsletter excerpt from a graduation speech delivered to the class of 1999 by an administrator from the Northern Turnpike: Satellite:

> Graduation is a promise. Public education is a promise that allows everyone the opportunity to become the best they can become. It is the promise that our society, based on the fundamentals of democracy, makes to itself that we will nurture and elevate all of us for the good of all of us. Our democratic society is itself a promise that everyone will have equal opportunity to obtain the best that our accumulated and diverse culture can transmit, generation to generation. It promises equal opportunity before the law and within the land, and for our purposes, it promises equal opportunity to succeed.

The remainder of this speech is examined further in Chapter VIII. All things considered, I had to discover whether we are really just teaching the EMH students how to do school.

An administrator from the Northern Turnpike: Satellite emphasized an important point: "Of course we are, but that is true of all the kids."

CHAPTER IV

FAIRY GODMOTHER AS OBSERVER

Introduction

In this chapter field notes and observations are rewritten in order to convey for the reader a sense of the researcher's story and the learning environment of the students. The notes and observations are synthesized into sections identifying the students and the researcher's impressions of what a day at school is like for them. A summary of findings is included at the end of each section. These findings are further discussed in Chapter VIII.

Initial Visits: Early Impressions

I arrived for my first visit at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite feeling conspicuously "university-ish." "I wouldn't have taught kids in these clothes," I muttered to myself. "Here I am, about to begin a research project in their school-day world, dressed like a budget-minded clinician." I changed hands gripping the dark canvas book bag—an environmental statement at least.

The school was abuzz with kids of all ethnicities, wardrobes, hairstyles, and degrees of teenness. There was an electric vitality about the place. My heart beat faster within the hubbub as I negotiated the crowded hallways and made my way to the General Office. Oops. Wrong office. The principal came out of a door further down the hall and called out, "Oh, there's my appointment." I guess I must stand out . . . amidst the known staff rushing to respond to bells and the overall multicolored montage that forms the student world of high school hallway.

We sank into cushy seats around an oval, muted green table. The wheels on the chairs were ultra responsive despite deep carpet, and I had to be careful to sit still and contain my enthusiasm. After all, it was June, and these people had worked a long school year. We were joined by the counselor, and I embarked on an introduction to my research. There were few questions. One, though, involved the amount of time required of teachers. I was impressed with this principal right away. He said something like, "What will this mean in terms of time for my teachers? They are tired, and it's a tough time of year." I appreciated his protection of the front-line staff and explained that I would be making related phone calls, I had prepared the questionnaires and forms, and unless the school wanted to send a letter home introducing the project, there was not a lot for the staff to do.

Both the counselor and the principal consented to an interview to be carried out over the next week. I was delighted. At this point the counselor asked the teacher involved in the core program for the EMH students to join us. I knew the teacher from mutual previous employment at the Northern Turnpike: Magnet. We shook hands and then walked together to her classroom. By now the halls were empty; students were in class—their work day had begun.

We entered the room, and I had my first glimpse of the learning community. Only a handful of students was present. They sat variously in desks, at two meeting-sized rectangular tables, and on a worn sectional couch. I greeted the program aide, also someone with whom I had worked before. She bent over a student, assisting with textbook instruction.

The students looked at me inquiringly when the teacher asked them to stop what they were doing. One or two I recognized as having previously attended the school of choice for students with special needs. The teacher introduced me to the class and explained my presence.

The floor was given to me, and I requested that the students take home the packages which included the information letter, parent/guardian demographic survey, parent/guardian interview questions, and informed consent pages. Expecting more kids based on the registration information, I prepared over 20 packages, but only nine students were in the classroom that morning. Others were spread around the school in different classes and would be given the packages when they returned for their core program sessions. I had been made aware that there could be some reading difficulties at home, from an ESL perspective as well as possibly English-speaking parents with a reading difficulty. Not wanting to embarrass anyone, I offered to read the forms and letters aloud if it would help and drew special attention to my phone number, included in case there was a need for assistance. In total, nine students received the packages I had prepared and seven returned them.

I telephoned the principal at the Southern Turnpike to arrange a time for my first visit to meet relevant staff and discuss the research. He attempted to transfer my call to the Student Services staff, feeling that this was the most appropriate contact. This failed, and I called the school again and left a message for the suggested staff member. After waiting five days, I telephoned again and successfully reached this informant. Within one hour I was at the site and introduced myself.

The informant was aware of the research request through a faxed scrawled note received from the school district stating, "_______ will handle . . . ," but it was admitted that the "the topic makes me squirm." The informant was reluctant to speak with me at first regarding the students of concern to the research, stating that there were very few such students in the entire school population. A quick check of the computer records revealed that all of the said students were in academic classes.

The informant went on to say that discussing the research topic was a source of discomfort because "not very much" was done in secondary schools to facilitate citizenship and transition education. "But that's going to change next year."

The informant asked why I was not going to the district program of choice for EMH secondary students to do the research. I explained that creating an off-campus transition program for the school had formed my MEd project, and I was now focussing on what other secondary schools did to facilitate citizenship and transition education.

The informant printed the report card results of two of the EMH students who had entered the school as Opportunity Funded but had not received any special support. Both students were passing; in some cases marginally, but passing just the same.

The informant stated that there was no problem with sending the letter and informed consent to the parents of one of the students, K: "She's struggling." When the informant called the student's classroom, it was indicated that K was writing a final exam and would pick up the letter after school. The other student, a Grade 10 boy, was summoned to the Student Services office, and the informant asked him, "Do you remember me? I met you at the beginning of the year."

The informant asked the student to take the package home to his mother and then to return the envelope to the Student Services office by the following Wednesday. It was reported to me after he left the office that this student had stayed away on two prior occasions when booked for academic and psychological assessment; therefore, staff deliberately kept test dates a secret in order to have him at school at the right time. This envelope just might not make it home.

I requested the names of a relevant teacher and an administrator to whom I could pass on the research information in order to request their voluntary participation. Two names were suggested, the first a classroom teacher and the second an assistant principal.

We needed to arrange a time during the next week for me to pick up the returned forms. The informant had indicated in our earlier telephone conversation that the intention on this particular day was to "be out by three p.m." I apologized, acknowledged the busy time of year at the school, secured an appointment, and departed.

A few days later I received a phone call from the Student Services secretary at the Southern Turnpike telling me that K's mother had completed the voluntary participation form when she had dropped K off at school that morning. I could pick up the envelope whenever I could get to the school. I drove over immediately to retrieve my first official data collection and potential parent interview. Anxious to read the contents, I picked up the envelope and opened it in the parking lot. Yes, she would consent to an interview; and yes, she had completed the enclosed questionnaire.

My third and last visit to the Southern Turnpike was to the Student Services office. When I arrived at our agreed-upon time, the informant was setting up a student to complete an interest inventory on a computer in the foyer. I browsed around the Student Services waiting area. Along one wall was a lengthy book case crammed with college calendars from all across Canada and selected calendars from the United States and other international locations. There were a number of posters depicting young adults carrying books and striding off into the future's proverbial sunset, with messages about life dreams coming true through hard work—and thanks, by the way, to reading. Others emphasized excellence and academic achievement. Absent were pictures of youth with visible disabilities.

A brilliantly colored manila tag list of deadlines to apply for various colleges and universities was clearly displayed, with special attention given to oversubscribed programs in institutions such as NAIT. Information about scholarships was also posted, including the provincial Rutherford for good academic performance during each of three years of high school. Other walls boasted slogans relevant to school spirit.

Eventually, the informant invited me to sit in an office which was filled with personal memorabilia as well as the tools of a secondary school counselor: big binders; pots of pens, pencils, and highlighters; various assessment manuals; coffee cups; water bottles; tea bags; textbooks; and photocopied motivational phrases urging teens to get used to hard work and the "real world."

During the interview the informant expressed a wish that more close consideration had been given to the questions left for reflection, as per my research protocol, a minimum of three days prior to the interview.

After the interview the informant gave me the envelopes collected from the school administrator and teacher who were requested to consider participation in the research. I eagerly took the material to the car and proceeded to slit the envelopes open. I was disappointed to find that both potential informants declined an interview but grateful that each had completed a questionnaire and submitted anecdotes.

The data-collection process continued later in the week when the informant called me to say that she had contacted the parent of the boy who was given a package to take home. The parent had not received the forms, but she was willing to complete one if I took it over to the school. She would pick up the forms, personally. As a researcher, I hit pay dirt two days later: A phone call came from the secretary of Student Services. Enclosed was another questionnaire completed and permission granted for another interview. I thanked the school staff for their assistance. Parent interviews would be carried out during the summer holidays.

In summary, from the Fairy Godmother's point of view the initial visits to the Northern Turnpike: Satellite and the Southern Turnpike were the source of both excitement and disappointment. The excitement related to the learning environment came in the form of the energy of youth, the hubbub that is high school. The disappointment was due to the relatively low number of informants who consented to participate in the study. The Northern Turnpike: Satellite afforded greater opportunity for data collection in terms of observations and interviews than the Southern Turnpike, although the Southern Turnpike offered the singular gift of a parent/guardian interview.

On Doing School: Later Impressions

This section is intended to provide the reader with another dimension of the learning environment based on my interpretation. The Northern Turnpike route became a familiar trek, and mine became a familiar face, at least between the entry-door hallway and the home base of the students who were in the Opportunity-funded classroom. I ventured out to an integrated class, Science 14, taught by a cheerful individual who greeted the kids at the door and joked about the morning Slurpee fix (sugar) they were getting before they came to science class. Neither he nor the students seemed perplexed to have me observe in the classroom. A comedy video was being shown, and I did not stay too long. I was asked not to disclose the title.

The visual and auditory presence of Slurpee beverages reminded me of one of the informant's interview comments related to extra privileges for EMH students that had been made a few days earlier. The informant had stated:

> We do a fairly good job of allowing them some extra privileges around the school; for example, ___________ allows them extra time to get Slurpees that they can drink in class. They have the same lunch hour as the rest of the school to integrate with the rest of the kids, to make them feel part of the larger community.

Regarding lunch hour, I spent more than a few in the classroom. The staff remained in the classroom all day. There were no preparation periods or scheduled breaks for either teacher or program aide. This included lunch time, because the room was left open for the students to come and go. The teens generally remained there, using the microwave, sink, kettle, mugs, CD player, and sectional couch. Throughout the break the teacher and program aide sat among the youth, providing congenial supervision.

In summary, the extended observation time made me aware of another dimension of the learning environment. I realized that it was also different than I had encountered in high school settings previously. Examples of these environmental differences included the presence of a couch, kettle and microwave, and group seating at tables rather than desks. Also unique was that the staff remained with the students throughout the day and that the group was situated within one room. No other professional educators stopped by to exchange information or to relieve the core staff. EMH students came and went, depending on their particular posted timetable. Some students stayed in the classroom for the entire day, just as did the staff. That the students ate their lunches with the staff and not beyond the classroom—a cafeteria was located around the corner—also struck me as unusual. In the other high schools where I had been employed as a teacher, extracurricular club meetings would result in staff occasionally spending their lunch break with the students, but not on a daily basis.

A second dimension of the learning environment of the other high schools that was different involved the number of teachers with whom each student came into contact, generally a different person for each subject area. Finally, where my initial visits to the sites offered a glimpse of the passionate energy I remembered from previous membership in a high school community, I came to realize that this zest was not as evident to me in the separate classroom setting, with the exception of the wonderful circle dancing that occasionally occurred among the students new to Canada.

Who Are These Kids? Observations and Collages

A rewriting of the field notes and site observations of this environment helped to describe the sense of the community of learners that I observed. The students presented a delightful mix of culture, and not just teen culture. Homelands were represented by large manila, poster-sized flags drawn by hand and colored with pencil crayons, tacked up on the borders around one wall of the room. In addition to the Canadian maple leaf, Turkey, Vietnam, Thailand, Lebanon, Jamaica, and Germany were among the places of origin depicted in student-created posters.

One student wore the shawl head covering that signified her religiosity. Her jeans, acrylic top, and high-heeled clunky shoes were very contemporary and very generic in the high school crowd. Her brilliant engagement ring, resplendent with rubies and old gold, was perhaps not as commonly seen on a 17-year-old girl in a high school classroom. Promised to an arranged marriage, she would end Year 12 with a return to her parents' country of origin and the start of a very different life. On more than one Friday during my weeks of field work, male students in the class told their teacher that they were going to the mosque and would leave the school at noon.

In summary, with one exception, considering clothes, hairstyles, and makeup, these students were very similar in appearance to their age peers. The one exception was a student who had a congenital visual impairment and was also educable mentally handicapped. Her clothes and hairstyle were not the latest youthwear. She was noticeably out of step with the girls in the room, in social behavior as well as appearance. Her teacher commented, "She's very needy."

During one of the visits we sat together on the couch, and the students shared comments about their collage projects which had been completed at the beginning of the year. The collage is kind of an *All About Me* expressing their interests when some of them had first started at the high school ten months earlier. A blonde female student in T-shirt and khakis said, "I've changed; I'm not like that any more."

I took several moments to study the collages, and eventually the students gave me permission to take them home. The art was completed on large poster paper, and after checking out various scanning and photocopying sources, I realized that the size was prohibitive to include in this text without considerable changes to the original. Instead, descriptions of three of the collages are included.

The first collage was created by a 16-year-old teen female, all about a person who needed me to know that she had changed *a great deal* since she had created this. The background of the collage was colored with green and blue felt pen, and tiny hand-drawn sketches of red lips and pink balloon hearts floated between the magazine cut outs. The images chosen included several pictures of African-American and Caucasian male adolescent heart throbs, presumably taken from teen and movie magazines. At the center of the picture was a bottle of Baccardi rum, glued down over the bare torso of a Tarzan actor. To the right of the actor's face was a picture of a bottle of cold beer. To the left was a picture of a Winnie the Pooh stuffed toy. Other images include L'Oréal facial makeup, a picture of twin babies, a Tampax advertisement, a cut-out text that said "Got milk," a Nike swoosh symbol, and a white rose.

The second collage was created by a 17-year-old teen female. Her collage was all about a person whom the teacher described as "needy." The background of the collage featured pencil-crayoned pink hearts, two golden princess crowns, and various nameless, curvy, purple shapes. In the top right corner of the page was an image of a Terry Fox statue. In the opposite corner was a porcelain doll, one of two on the poster. An image of the movie *Lion King II: Simba's Pride* was situated mid center, next to a picture of Babar, the storybook elephant monarch. Flanking Babar were two of the Canadian movie hosers known as Bob and Doug McKenzie. At the lower center of the picture was actor Eddy Murphy portraying Dr. Doolittle. Photos of guide dogs in training and two different specialized computer monitors indicated that this student faced unique challenges in addition to developmental disability. Central to the picture was a pink ceramic mug with the symbol for breast cancer research and the word *hope*. Both the mother and grandmother of this student had passed away the year before, resulting in the relocation of the girl and her brother to their father's home in a new city.

The third collage was created by a 16-year-old male student. His collage was all about a person with an invisible developmental disability. This piece had a yellow felt pen background. The predominant colors of the images were red and white. There were red Canadian flags, four of them, and one American flag. Four red sports cars shone daringly, as well as a yellow VW bug, a black convertible, a white sports car, and a blue convertible. Sports featured in the magazine pictures included basketball, snowboarding, boxing, and hockey—and is Nintendo considered a sport, too? Folgers' coffee, McDonald's Golden Arches, and cherry-topped cheese cake suggested favorites of another type. Actress Pamela Anderson and various anonymous golden-haired beauties frolicked between the hockey images. The hockey pictures were a representation of Team Canada, Team USA, the New York Rangers, the Anaheim Mighty Ducks, the Detroit Red Wings, and the Toronto Maple Leafs. Former Canadian hockey star Wayne Gretzky had a noticeable presence in the piece. A Bengal tiger and a massive grizzly bear were pictured and seemed out of place among the sports photos. The text cutout for inclusion

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accompanied a shot of pop culture cartoon character Bart Simpson and read as follows: "If you told a really, really good joke, would it make God laugh?"

In summary, an analysis of the three collages suggests that through this medium the EMH students expressed humor, spirituality, varied interests, self-awareness and self-concern, and a zest for life experiences that might be considered by some to be typical of other teens, both male and female. At the same time, support for the findings presented previously in this study on the range of EMH student development within similar age groups was evident, especially among the young women. In addition, the struggle that had been one female student's life experience was communicated.

Spelling, Monday Morning . . .

Field notes and observations have been rewritten to provide readers with insight into what EMH students' "Doing School" was like to an observer. This section concludes with a summary.

I arrived at school at about 8:20 a.m. Once again my breath was whisked away by the sheer energy of the hallways. Male and female students laughed raucously, called out to each other, and embraced as they met close friends in the corridor. I saw wide smiles; white flashing teeth (some colored elastics on braces too); accompanied by blue, hazel, brown, and green eyes crinkling in merriment or rolling to the ceiling in disgust at the antics of peers. It was a blur of white pants; tall, clunky shoes; and charcoal, maroon, or blue skinny, strapped tops or midriff T-shirts for the girls. Sport-logo T-shirts or plaid, button shirts on the guys hung loosely over cargo pants with multiple pockets and were grounded by the ever-present heavy-soled black shoes.

I breezed into the classroom. The program aide had posted a spelling list on the blackboard for the students to copy. Smiles and nods welcomed me as the kids bent over their binders and copied the list. The student with a visual impairment wrote her words from a staff-supplied, enlarged photocopy. Her work was checked frequently by the program aide to ensure correct duplication. The students asked the program aide to read certain words on the list and requested definitions. Individuals volunteered their guesses about the meanings, but there was limited banter in the class. Each person was studiously attending to task, and, as more youth arrived, they settled automatically into the routine of copying the word list.

The girls tended to sit together elbow to elbow at one of the rectangular tables, binder edges overlapping. The boys preferred to sit at individual desks. Two girls sat on the sectional couch and started to chat, but the program aide reminded them that they were not to sit on the couch during work time. They moved to another rectangular table to work together. A bell rang for class change, and three of the students left to go to another class; eight students remained. The program aide anxiously wrote the names of those who had copied the list for the week. She had to ensure that everyone received the list; and, in turn, everyone would be tested on the words on Friday of that week.

The teacher arrived close to 9 a.m. Without scheduled preparation time and with all-day supervision in the classroom, including lunch hours, she arrived about 30 minutes after the students. A morning routine was in place for the program aide to facilitate. Everything moved smoothly.

Without comment, the students who remained in the class turned to work on separate photocopied units of social studies. There were accompanying questions with the booklets—kind of a distance-learning but classroom-based approach. It was time for me to be helpful, and I stopped writing research observations to join the table group and assist the girls with the reading. The boys requested help too, and we three adults did our best to support each student in an individual, text-based learning process.

When students tired of one subject they opened up booklets on English language arts or math. Some began working on science assignments, tackling a vocabulary-term crossword concerning matter and energy. Most courses were at the 16 level. A few of the students left this home base as others returned from physical education, science, or CTS modules. Those who were here for the first time that day were encouraged to copy the spelling words down promptly, their names added to the list of completers eligible for Friday's test.

There was a core group of youth who did not leave the class. Theirs were the bulletin-board timetables indicating *Study Hall* for complete mornings and afternoons on certain days. During the field work I became accustomed to the look and feel of the setting. This was indeed Monday morning coming down in a secondary school program for educable mentally handicapped students.

In summary, *Spelling, Monday Morning* indicated that although these EMH students were alike in dress and manner to other teens, their classroom experience was unlike that of most other youth attending school on-site, especially for those students who were in Study Hall all day. In terms of pedagogy, the curriculum required of the students was presented in Distance Education learning packages, with the exception of the weekly spelling list.

CHAPTER V

FAIRY GODMOTHER AS LISTENER

Introduction

I shed the wings of Omniscience and humbled Fairy Godmother to become Listener during an interview with an EMH female student's mother and stepfather. Prior to the interview I provided the informants with the major research questions and a definition of citizenship and transition education. As I listened and documented the interview responses, I attempted to identify literature that would support their comments. As a result, reference to relevant literature on citizenship, contemporary issues, and transition education is woven into the text that follows. For the benefit of the reader, some descriptive text is included to convey the setting and experience of the researcher.

Included within *Listening to Parents'/Guardians' Voices* is a description of the kitchen-as-interview-site. The first findings, entitled *Issues*, highlight quotations from the informants about their daughter's vulnerability, which they perceived to be the result of low self-esteem and difficulties with setting personal boundaries. The issues are interwoven with literature findings that support the comments. The second findings, entitled *Positive Approaches*, once again offer informant quotations interspersed with literature support. A summary of the two findings concludes the chapter. These findings are further discussed in Chapter VIII. Organizing the chapter in this way provides readers with some additional insight into the wisdom and perspectives of the parents.

Listening to Parents'/Guardians' Voices

Sometimes as qualitative researchers we are privileged to spend particularly meaningful moments with others. A summer afternoon listening to the views of a unique family afforded such an opportunity. The interview was conducted with the mother and stepfather of K, a fully integrated Grade 10 female pupil. K, one of seven students identified by the Southern Turnpike guidance counselor as educable mentally handicapped in a school population of approximately 1,100 enrolments, was present for most of the session.

I arrived at the two-story townhouse with canvas book bag in hand just as K's mother was coming down the front steps. In the excitement of welcoming relatives visiting from across the country, she had forgotten about our interview. I confess that my disappointment was immediate. Like any researcher, I had encountered some roadblocks in accessing interview informants (in fact, K's was the singular parent or guardian interview participation in the study).

With only brief hesitation, K's mother passed over cash to her sister and requested cigarettes, motioning her relatives to carry on to the store without her. Shaking my hand, she welcomed me into the crowded entryway. A derailed row of multiply sized footwear sporting dinosaurs, hockey insignia, and telltale swooshes snaked across the linoleum. The cheerful assortment offered company for my own student-issue sneakers. I had not worn my career best to this appointment, not wanting to intimidate my informants in their townhouse territory with any perceived university elitism.

We settled into the kitchen, and K's mother put on a fresh pot of coffee, promising that the brew was as good as a popular brand of java and at half the price. Other adults and children passed through the kitchen en route to the living room, and I was introduced as "the university person doing research on K's school stuff." I squeezed into the back-wall bench of a picnic-style table and plugged in my prize black Wal-Mart tape recorder, recently purchased just for this purpose. K's mother poured the coffee, lit a cigarette, and we were off to the interview races.

Issues

As mentioned previously, quotations which highlight the vulnerability of K have been included. For instance, K's mother referred to an incident that had occurred on that very weekend:

> She has a really good friend that I've known since they were little and I trust, and I trust K, for the most part. She's kind of taken a dip out of that right now, but that's okay; it can come back. They went to a rave, and the other mom and I really stretched the curfew time. We allowed them to stay out till four. The first night went all right. She wanted to go back, and I thought, Summer holiday is coming to an end, and I thought I would let her go one more time, and that was a mistake. It's been difficult since that Saturday night, getting phone calls from all kinds of people that we have no idea who they are. . . . We're pretty certain that someone's got her interested in drugs, and that's what's—that's the only thing I can think of, because she's not been herself since then. She goes to church. She's got a—well, we do—we have a faith, and she does too, and she feels really bad that she got her eyes off the right—what's given her steadiness, and she kind of tried to fit in with all those—and it doesn't work. It just doesn't work. I know she doesn't drink, and I know she doesn't do drugs voluntarily. I do believe somebody slipped her some. . . . She is an overcomer, and she's got smarts to spare, especially in certain areas when it comes to her own conscience, right from wrong. Overcoming fear is tough for her, that there's so much out there. I think for some kids it is a little easier if they have the self-confidence. She's more inclined to be a follower, so that's a real concern to me. That's what happened with this rave thing, . . . because of peer pressure. Then these groups wouldn't go, and they wouldn't be the norm. That makes me realize something too, though. They can't even do that until they have self-worth and self-esteem.

I listened intently, and it occurred to me that this scenario could have been experienced by any adolescent. As a teen, I remembered my own mother advising me to accept only previously unopened beverages when I was not at home. However, Lamorey and Leigh (1996) suggested that secondary students such as K truly are at a significantly higher risk for negative outcomes associated with drug and alcohol abuse as a result of their cognitive, social, emotional, communicative, and sometimes physical limitations. These youth may experience difficulty assessing high-risk social situations and making accurate judgements about the behavior and motivation of others. They may be unsure how to ask for help or protection if required.

Further analysis indicates that low self-esteem contributes to the vulnerability that EMH youth experience. The next interview quotation highlights K's struggle with self-esteem regarding her appearance. While I was in her home, K went upstairs and came down twice, each time wearing different clothes. She was dressing for her job in customer service at a nearby mall. At one point she entered the kitchen wearing a striped, shoulderless, tube dress. She sought an opinion and perhaps approval from her parents in the following manner:

K: This doesn't look very good.

Mother: No, K, you look good.

K: Is this dress big?

Stepfather: No.

Mother: No, honey.

K: It's size six.

Mother: But I would suggest you take your cardigan.

After confirming her clothing choice, K left home to walk to work and returned within 20 minutes. She had arrived two hours early for her shift and was sent home by the supervisor. In the following quotation, her mother pondered what lay ahead for K:

> I don't want her to get so discouraged she quits trying. At this point in time I don't think she knows anything about that. She hasn't ever given up. Things are going to get tougher for her, but I want for her to be able to communicate to teachers when she feels scared or when she feels like she can't do it, that they'll say, "Okay, let's try this then." She's actually got her heart set on now becoming an aesthetician, which I think is wonderful. She can do whatever she wants, as far as I'm concerned. She can be a doctor. It might take her 12 years instead of 8 years. So what?

I was reminded of Brown and Timmons' (1994) comments concerning parental expectations of youth with developmental disabilities: "It must not be assumed that because people live together, they may be aware of the skills, needs, or opportunities required by young people; or that they really know what their children can and cannot do" (p. 9). However, K's mother tempered her earlier comments on career choices for K when comparing her daughters, the elder of whom had worked at a McDonald's Restaurant:

> I didn't want K to work at McDonalds. The reason was that [the other daughter] had, and she had to work so, so, so hard, and it was good. But K's a different person, and her gifts and talents lay in a different area.

The next quotation indicates her mother's view of the most important factor contributing to K's vulnerability; that is, the setting of personal boundaries as she moves from school into the wider world:

> Boundaries, boundaries, setting boundaries for herself, what she will and will not allow people to do to her, because a little bit of pressure, if someone goes, "Oh come on, come on," and I think, kids especially, that's the biggest struggle, is to pull away from that, is to have the strength of character to say, "Well(" For the most part she does really well, but it's kind of like they get isolated and the pack jumps on them; just for survival sake sometimes.
>
> I have a theory that academics are important, but the living skills are more important, and the academics will come along if the living skills are strong and in place...what I meant by that was morals and values, and it doesn't have to be religious, but just real simple, basic things: respecting one another, respecting the preciousness of others and their property. I have all these little things that kids just love. "You abuse, you lose," and "If you can be trusted in the little things, you can be trusted in the big things"; "You can call it control if you want; there are boundaries"; "And that's my job. Your job is to be the kid and do the best you can." We've definitely had our challenges, and learning to communicate is a big one... I think it is a necessity, especially now because I feel that teachers—my heart goes out to them. You could not pay me enough to do that job with what they have to put up with now. Kids are—there's nothing that binds them together; there's nothing common; there's no sense of unity, I guess.

Positive Approaches

As discussed previously, parents'/guardians' quotations, chosen to highlight the existing positive approaches to citizenship and transition education that they identified as a part of K's life, are presented; these are interwoven with the literature:

At the beginning of the interview, K's mother related that bringing their blended family to a workable arrangement was a process, with assistance from outside agencies that included parenting classes, a strong link to a church organization, family and community support services, and a private counseling resource center. After an unprompted sharing of the divorce details which resulted in an earlier temporary separation from K, her mother concluded the difficult story:

> She moved in here for good, to stay, a year ago, June thirtieth, and she went to _________School, and it has been so good for her. Straight home from school, straight to do her homework. We run on a team principle here. We're coaches, and we don't get argued with. Of course, we don't want to think we get argued with! . . . But there's boundaries, and they don't get crossed. We've really been working on this a lot because now with his five kids, we have one team, one set of rules. Here I try really hard to get them to think for themselves in the sense that, "What would you do if it was your daughter? Here's my suggestion, but I want you to do what you think is best."

As Listener, I focussed on the "do what you think is best." K was allowed decision-making opportunities. I made a mental note at this point in the interview to revisit Dempsey's (1996) writings on the facilitation of empowerment for persons with developmental disabilities. This included the internalization of a sense of control, self-efficacy, participation, an understanding of the environment, and an ability to meet personal needs. I found this work to be complemented by Schloss, Alper, and Jayne's (1999) self-determination standpoint on using experiential building blocks to prepare youth with developmental disabilities for making critical life choices. Self-determination is the ability to consider options and make appropriate choices regarding residence, work, school, and leisure. K's situation was an example.

Another positive approach that was expressed by the parents/guardians was related to the valuing of professional educators and other members of the school community. The mother stated that during the divorce, which had been an issue in the early days of junior high, K attended a study hall facilitated by staff to help her manage the course work and ensure that at school she maintained a caring, supportive relationship with a significant adult. Such mentoring of students arose frequently in the findings. The following quotation exemplifies the mother's view of the importance of relationship:

> All of the teachers that she has had have always said that they're astounded at how she has succeeded, because they didn't think she would. And she's such a fighter. She's an overcomer, and that's all there is to it, and she's very conscientious, so I'm really, really proud of her. When they can make a good connection with the teacher, be it a male or female teacher, that seems to be where they can—it's like a rock, an anchor. They've got to have something as an anchor. If home sucks, which most homes nowadays do, unfortunately, they've got to

> have somewhere or something that they can go, one person. I know for myself, it was one person that made all the difference in my life, and it doesn't have to have anything to do with the financial thing, because we were really, really wealthy. A lot of the really poor families, they had it together; they were successful. So what it boiled down to was who they're going to, who the anchors are. One teacher can make such a difference. And you know who else made a difference, was the caretakers. Even the guys that mop the floor. My oldest daughter _______, that's who she remembers, was a fellow called ______ that was the caretaker at the school. He was kind; he had eye contact; he would say, "Oh, _______, you're a nice girl," when maybe everything else in that day went wrong. If somebody like that—if it's the secretary of the school(those things all work together. And when they know they can go to one person, and say if that person can't help them, that person says, "You know what, I can't help you with this. Would you like me to . . . whatever . . . ?" Or "I can find somebody that can help you." I have found that some of the teachers at her school have been absolutely remarkable, that the principal was good. But there's the cosmo teacher; she's one. She teaches citizenship over there just by her life, and so do a lot of the teachers there. She's happy to go to school. Because somebody, that teacher, Mrs. ________, tells her that she's there for her, and that's what did it. She was a role model. Anyway, I'd have to look back and say that the people she's chosen, for the most part, have been people that she admires. She admires that person; right away I think of Mrs. ______again, and saw success. If you take the step, this will happen and improve.

Considered important to the study in that the next anecdote demonstrates K's awareness of community resources and how to access them, K's mother related a brief predicament experienced by a single parent living in their neighborhood. The person was working two jobs and having problems with care for her sons, aged 9 and 11. "K came along and somehow got them down to Boys' and Girls' Clubs, and they registered, and they're in there now. So they're happy; they're doing constructive stuff."

Following this parental anecdote, I suggested that K's demonstration of citizenship in her neighborhood was perhaps attributed to her upbringing. But her mother immediately linked K's behavior once again to the influence of a teacher, emphasizing the impact that a mentor or a significant relationship with a caring adult can have in the lives of struggling youth (Ellis, 1997). From this finding, I also realized that K was aware of community resources and how to access them, an important part of transition from school (HRDC, 1998). Her mother had a caution for K on the caretaking of others, once again emphasizing the presence of personal boundaries and the important role of parents, who, in adolescence, continue to be K's first teachers:

> She has a real sense of responsibility for people, which is nice. But we are also trying to teach her right now to balance that. You can offer people stuff, you can help them out, but if they don't want to make a bit of a commitment, there's nothing more you can do except to know that. And it's really important to have that compassion and that kind of thing, but to know when to pull out so that they don't suck you dry. She has been learning that, and that's good. But I was really proud of her when she did that. She takes an interest in kids.

Elsewhere in the findings, K's mother acknowledged that school experiences are not always positive, "We get so dumped on with all the rotten things that people say, especially in school." The findings included her views towards contemporary issues such as drug and alcohol abuse and how in an educational setting, a collaborative approach to prevention involving other agencies made sense to her:

> If they have classes where the kids learn, "Okay, this is what other people say. But that's not what you depend on. You have to depend on and know yourself and to open your ears up, to hear the good things that people say." So if they would have classes maybe on some of those outlines that AADAC teaches. A lot of these kids use drug and alcohol. Yes, yes, that's it. If they could be more community based, the community resource, the school be a community resource where people could go in and teach a course on boundaries. Do it on an evening or a Saturday. I don't mean to make it sound so easy; I know it isn't, not to start with. But down the road it is. It pays off in the long run. . . . That's one thing I would—I think it is crucial, and it's something I've been really pushing, is to get the schools to teach the kids boundaries. Family and Community Support Services have programs that they can come in and teach for free, so why not? When it comes to living skills, that's when they have to be able to stand up. And it's not just from ourselves that we can teach our kids to develop leadership qualities, not because, oh, we're so great, but to put a stop to these things, sort of like when you drop a rock in water, it ripples out. If somebody goes and says, "You don't talk to us like that. It's not appropriate," that stops it.

An educational policy studies reading again came to mind. Minzey and LeTarte (1994) made similar suggestions of ways that schools could enhance community life. One such suggestion was to collaboratively identify community problems and needs and view the school as a joint-use facility capable of assisting in the delivery of community resources among social, health, education, and governmental agencies.

During the interview I gained insight into K's school and family life. I learned that K enjoyed walking, shopping, rollerblading, and the social connections of a church youth group. At one point K went upstairs and returned carrying a resume she had formulated herself on a computer, incorporating tips from her older sibling. It was then that K's mother brought another positive element of citizenship and transition education to light by asking her daughter:

> Mother to K: K, what was your best experience in the last few years that kind of propelled you forward? You know what I mean? Where you really got your feet on the ground and decided that you knew this is what you wanted? What turned you around?
>
> K's reply: This job.

I was almost as delighted to learn about K's part-time employment as the family was to talk about it, because employment for persons with a developmental disability is one of the cornerstones that marks their equality, value, and inclusion as Canadian citizens. The reality for these individuals is that opportunities for meaningful work and reasonable incomes are limited (Uditsky, 1995). In asking the family about school programs and explaining my research focus, the findings suggest an absence of involvement in work experience, work study, or community volunteerism. According to *Supporting Integration: Work in Progress in Alberta* (Barrington, 1995), only 11% of secondary schools offer relevant life skills programs to students like K who are unsuccessful in the school's off-campus work experience program. Despite support in the literature (Nobes, 1998a; Riley, 1996, as cited in Vickers, 1997; Scrimshaw, 1981) and provincial legitimization to earn credits towards a high school diploma, there was no school-facilitated volunteer service learning program that K could access.

Despite her lack of success with the school work experience program, the findings suggest that K's mother coached her daughter towards increased competency in the world beyond school:

> So she had a little interview with the lady. And at first the woman said she wasn't too impressed with K, and I thought, What? And then I remembered, when K first meets someone she's shy a little bit. She kind of looks down, and the woman thought she wasn't listening. I said, "K, you're going to have to go and tell this woman that you can hear and take the message in better if you're not focusing on her." She kind of has to concentrate, but it's because of just auditory processing. She went back and told this woman that, and then it was okay.

There was a sense of personal value that allowed K to advocate for herself and turn a disappointing situation into a hopeful one. With this finding, I experienced an inward expression of an un-Fairy Godmotherlike, "Yes!" because Abery, Arndt, and Eggebean (1995; as cited in Lamorey & Leigh, 1996) claimed that students with developmental disabilities too rarely exercise an age-appropriate degree of self-advocacy and personal control over their lives. It seemed that K was learning strategies to ensure that her voice was heard and her potentials were made clear to others; in this case, an employer. I wasn't surprised to learn that her first job was a reckoning point for K. After all,

> work has many different meanings for man. The presence or absence of it is perhaps the most important pivot point in a human's life. A man spends his early life preparing for his work, the major section of his life, doing his chosen work, and the last part of his life, retired from his work [*sic*]. (Morris, 1969; as cited in Powlette, 1994, p. 2)

Summary

In summary, vulnerability to abuse in various situations, low self-esteem, and difficulty in setting personal boundaries were expressed by the parent and stepparent. Further parental perspectives included positive approaches to citizenship and transition education. These were community service collaboration occurring at the school level; the importance of relationships, particularly mentors at the school level; an emphasis on teaching communication skills leading to effective self advocacy; and doing what was necessary to assist EMH youth to gain the ever-so-important employment experience. The findings also illuminate the wisdom of parents and the tenacity of one female student with developmental disabilities.

CHAPTER VI

FAIRY GODMOTHER AS MUSE

Introduction

As the muse, it behooved me to consider where I had traveled while collecting data and where I was potentially heading with the data analysis. After transcribing the interview with K's parents, I returned to the puzzle of other multipage interview transcripts, colored stickies, and coiled scrapbooks that were taking over the living room floor. There was no doubt that my previous research, curriculum design, and facilitation of special education programs for secondary students were getting in the way of my analysis. It was very easy to slip onto the critical theorist's turnpike to emancipation: the way I thought things should be for EMH students attending high schools. I struggled to embrace the potential for academic achievement offered in the secondary schools participating in this research. Indeed, some of the students that I had seen as juniors in Grades 7, 8, and 9 at the magnet school had flourished in the satellite program, singing in the school choir and successfully passing integrated courses. Yet there still remained those youth who struggled in this largely textual, single-classroom setting.

This chapter establishes a link between what exists as citizenship and transition education and what the literature and the informants perceive to be the contemporary issues facing EMH students. In other words, a response to the second research question is forthcoming.

In presenting these findings, the informants are grouped according to those Within Cinderella's Circle and those from Beyond the Castle Walls. The findings include quotations and stories that report specifically the informants' views about the contemporary issues encountered by EMH students, as well as perceived barriers to offering Citizenship and Transition Education in the secondary school setting. The findings presented in this chapter are summarized at the end of each grouping, and they are further discussed in Chapter VIII.

Findings From Within Cinderella's Circle

Questionnaire and Checklist

The Professional Educator Questionnaire and the Curriculum Checklist completed by the professional educators, including counselors, teachers, and administrators, are attached as Appendix B. On the Curriculum Checklist, informants were invited to place a checkmark beside each aspect of citizenship and transition education that was present in their school's program. In the Professional Educator Questionnaire they were to place a checkmark beside the contemporary life issues they believed were of particular concern for EMH youth.

From among the professional educators who were requested to complete a contemporary issues checklist, three areas of total agreement emerged. Identified as contemporary issues by these informants were difficulties for EMH secondary school completers in coping with personal empowerment and decision making, factors related to community isolation, and ongoing self-sufficiency. All but one informant identified as contemporary challenges facing EMH young adults the finding and maintaining of paid employment, vulnerability to potential abuse from others, and living under circumstances of poverty caused by limited or fixed income supports (AISH). All but two informants agreed that overall resiliency and involvement with law enforcement were of concern. Rated the least of concern, with only one informant responding, was a lack of leisure skills.

Moving on to the Curriculum Checklist, at the Southern Turnpike, elements said to be present in the program were integration with non-EMH teens and community members, work experience for credits, career education, contemporary health education, postsecondary education opportunities, personal financial management, interview skills, job-search methods, resume preparation/application form strategies, social skills, valuing individual differences, and information about AISH.

At the Northern Turnpike: Satellite, elements said to be present included every item of the checklist except work study (no credits), job shadowing, school leadership (student's council, room rep), travel tips, and vehicle ownership.

Finally, the informant at the Northern Turnpike: Magnet checked off every curriculum element on the checklist.

In summary, some discrepancies existed between the informants' responses to the checklist and what was observed in the everyday unfolding of the high school experience of students attending the Northern Turnpike: Satellite. However, some of the discrepancies were addressed in the stories offered by the professional educators. The Southern Turnpike responses also had discrepancies when considering the interview findings; however, to a lesser degree than the Northern Turnpike: Satellite.

Stories From Professional Educators

Informants received a package distributed prior to the commencement of the observational component in their schools. Informants had a choice between presenting a story of their involvement with EMH teens on cassette or in writing, or not doing so. As the researcher-Fairy Godmother, I made the following request: "Reflecting on your experience, please share an anecdote or short personal narrative about working with a teen with developmental disabilities in transition which may highlight the challenges you believe they face."

To differentiate from the rest of the thesis text, these narratives are presented in italics. The stories are unedited and appear as told to the researcher. Each story revealed contemporary issues facing EMH secondary students as well as illuminated the courage and determination of these youth. Furthermore, some new understandings relating to culture, international life experience, and gender are presented for the reader. All the findings are summarized following the final story, and the discussion of them follows in Chapter VIII.

Northern Turnpike: Satellite (Written)

Principal:

Eddie came to us as a 14-year-old who had just been dumped by his father after Eddie's mother had been murdered. Eddie had active anger issues with the world. In addition to his emotional problems, Eddie had/has intellectual processing problems similar to those of fetal alcohol syndrome. He acted out, defied authority, endured many suspensions, and was able to complete only 15 credits [possible 80?] in two years and seven months here. He left after swearing at me and another teacher. His foster mother/caregiver could do nothing with him or for him. My interventions [40 to 50 documented] did not help. Now he is at the mercy of the streets.

Southern Turnpike (Written)

Assistant Principal:

One of my students asked me if I thought taking English 20 in summer school was a good idea. Upon further questioning it became clear he believes he will be eventually taking academic courses and attending university! This boy has no sense of his own strengths and weaknesses. He works diligently and was furious when his mark in English 13 was in the 40s. He said he always got good marks in junior high. I reassured him that in English 16 and Communication 10 he did receive good marks. He was not satisfied; he wanted high marks in English 13 as well.

He is a large boy (six foot plus, 150-plus pounds) who could physically defend himself, but he is often bullied by other students, much smaller, who tease him. It no longer occurs in the classroom because his teachers are vigilant. However, there are no such protectors outside of school. Even the students who are not mean to him don't want to "hang out" with him.

His ability to succeed is often hampered by his paradoxical combination of beliefs about himself. He believes he has abilities he does not, and he does not recognize the abilities he does have (or does not believe in their value).

Southern Turnpike (Written)

Counselor:

A.L. was a student who entered our work study program five years ago. She tests at the Opportunity level. She was a sweet girl who was easily influenced. Fortunately, she fell in with positive role models. Her teachers were charmed with her sweetness and wanted to help. She became a very hard worker. We instituted *many supports for her—extra time and readers mostly. She graduated from high school and even managed to get Math 23. She was accepted into NAIT and just completed her first year. The supports she had in high school were there for her at NAIT.*

However, there have been some problems. Her father is Chinese and from Hong Kong. Because he re-entered her life, she is now financially secure and can put her entire effort into school. However, the price she pays is that he is very critical of her low ability and that she couldn't get into university. She still needs us after one of these attacks. Also, she was in an abusive relationship, and it took many hours of counseling to extract her. All during the year at NAIT, she has called my secretary many times in tears and very depressed.

My biggest fear for her is when she enters the work force and has not got all these supports. Also, she has to spend so much time working on her courses, and she has no time for socializing. She studies even on Saturday night and Sunday.

Although her father supports her [moneywise], he will not be proud of her when she graduates from office administration. Her mother is very low functioning, a very depressed and bitter woman who has severed relations with A.L. since she reconciled with her father.

Northern Turnpike Satellite (Audiotaped)

Teacher:

We had a Native student here at the beginning who was a really good worker. He did a great work experience for a very demanding store. It's a food market close to them, and they worked him like crazy. He wanted to go work on the rigs but couldn't do the academic enough. He would have been an excellent worker; he is an excellent worker, but he reads at about a Grade 1 level, and then I suggested he go to [the magnet school] because he was just too frustrated with the work, the level of the high school work. He was doing well, but he would get very frustrated. Anyway, everything just fell apart from it—totally fell apart. Then he ended up in a gang, and he was doing drugs, and life just fell apart for him. It's pretty sad.

Other students, they struggle. Some of them I look at and I just think, I wonder if they're going to live 'til they're 25. They just start getting hooked into stuff. Even the four years I've been here, Adaptation students are. I leave my room open all the time for them. Other kids migrate here and just spend time in the room during lunch hours. But some of those kids dropped out of school and they're working, and they're the Adapt kids who didn't get a program provided for them. They needed the nurturing, they needed the support, and it wasn't there, and there they are on the streets. And some of them took some of our [EMH] students with them. But they still phone back every once in awhile, say hello, and tell me about their babies that have been taken away and stuff like that. They get to a point where they give up. There's so many times when I was counseling that I'd go downtown; I'd have to go to court with students over there, and I'd run into ex-students that were just literally bums on the streets. It just broke my heart.

Northern Turnpike: Magnet (Audiotaped)

Teacher:

There was a terrible home situation when I went to pick her up. She was very afraid of going to find out whether or not she was pregnant. She had a suspicion that she was, and so I had told her that we would go to the clinic and get her tested, and she did not want her mom to know. Actually, she was living at her boyfriend's house, so it was the boyfriend's mom who was basically her primary caregiver at the time, and she was mortified and terrified of what the ramifications would be because there are already tons of kids running around in that home, and it's just a really sad situation that our city, beautiful ________, has places like this, and that children are actually living in situations like this. It was very eye opening for me to see.

It was everything from a totally rickety house, and a litter of puppies were just all lying around the front of the house. I stepped over about four of them along the sidewalk to get up to the house, and they didn't even move. So I wondered to myself, Puppies are playful and usually very excitable, and I thought, What have they eaten? They're all sleeping; they almost look dead. And they were just about four or five weeks old, just little guys.

And then the front of the house had about five or six gentlemen there with all their motorbikes parked in the front, kind of thing, and the inside of the house was very dark and dirty, and a couple of people smoking up sort of in the front room. Anyway, it probably took me about 10 minutes to get over the shock from seeing that this is where she lives and this is where she calls home. I remember walking in there, and there were at least 20 people in the home, and the lady in the back, the boyfriend's mother, cooks for everybody, and she has just a giant roaster in the back, and she was going to cook for them all like it was a just a big campout almost. And they were just going to have hot dogs or something like that, which is fine, but I'm quite sure that's a meal they have often, instead of every now and then.

And I'm just thinking, Okay, we're probably going to be bringing home a confirmed pregnancy thing, and she needs to eat right. And there's no milk anywhere; there were just alcoholic beverages all over the place; there wasn't any juice or milk.

So anyway, we took her to the doctor and found out that she was pregnant and just kind of received a lot of opposition from the doctor as well, but he wasn't allowed to give me a lot of the information because I wasn't the primary caregiver. I understood the predicament that he was in professionally, but I really asked him to see if he could bend the rules as much as he could, because I knew the primary caregiver probably wouldn't care all that much.

She didn't know what to ask. She was very open to the doctor, and when the doctor would tell her things, she would just agree, and "Okay, Okay," and wasn't even all that shocked that she was pregnant. It didn't register anyway. I think it hit her later, more later on, but she didn't really know what questions to ask. And through my mind there were 25 million questions racing through, and *they're just not prepared; they don't know what to ask. And so the doctor and I were able to chat a little bit when the girl went back to the waiting room, and he was kind enough then to give me a little bit more information, I think, than he probably normally would have, because I'd made him a little bit aware of the situation and that the caregiver more than likely is not going to come anywhere near here. And if she's going to carry this baby to term, which is now another situation that she had to figure out, what she wanted to do.*

So once the doctor and I talked and he gave me some information, he was kind enough to link me up with some of the different agencies that we could contact to help this girl through, both nutrition-wise and support-wise, to be with other pregnant teens and things like that. So that was great.

And then we went home, and the girl decided to tell her caregiver that everything was verified, and it was not received very well. Understandably so, but at the same time it was terrible. I had to take her out of the house because I thought she'd be hit or something like that. There were words flying through the air and everything.

She was cooking, and so we got her at a really bad time, and she was really understandably upset, because obviously she's already cooking for 20 or X amount of people, and she was upset that this young girl had not used better precautions, and at her age she should know better, and that she had not had her prescription filled. That was, I think, where her anger stemmed from. But apparently about a week later or something like that, then things ended up becoming more accepted and everything like that. But the mother did say, "The only reason you did this is to keep my son. You felt that you were losing him," and stuff like that, so they knew too already. And in talking to this young girl down the road, she admitted that that's one of the reasons why she wanted to get pregnant.

She carried on at school for a while, and then things did not work out with her boyfriend, and she moved back home. They found it was just too difficult for her to be at home because her mom was also taking care of two twins and a younger brother as well, so they moved her to BC, and there was a friend of the family there that was going to be her caregiver while in BC, which was a little bit of a scary move for her because she's going by herself in this new predicament to live with this woman that she doesn't very much know.

Northern Turnpike: Satellite (Audiotaped)

Teacher:

With these students, they're from different backgrounds, and in [magnet school] we had a large population of Native students. They[the Satellite students] work much differently. These kids have been in European schools that are highly regimented, or even from different places: Jamaica, Philippines, Fiji. They are very strict schools. Our kids, they tell stories about them being hit if they haven't completed their homework or whatever. And so what we work on is getting a balance between what they've been through in education, and they come in feeling they can get away with everything in Canadian schools, so we work on getting a balance. Anything about being a woman too; we work a lot with that,

> *and with families. And if I needed to, I'd get support from one of the male administrators. I've had their support. . . . One[student] was Romanian. He challenged [the program aide] and myself in every way possible. But we would get into whatever; I don't want to say confrontations, but maybe it is a confrontation, because I would confront him about his behavior or his attitudes. He'd go and he'd come back and we'd talk, and each time something like that happened, he'd pull things more and more together. He dealt with them most times. A very demanding English teacher just didn't understand about his behaviors, how he did things in the world. And he passed that course. He got, I don't know, 65 or 70, whatever. And he fought at first to get it; it was through our support. He had grown up in a war zone. His parents had lived in two different cities, and he lived with his grandparents, and then his sister lived with a different grandparent. And at nine years old he'd walk down taking machine guns off dead bodies and playing with them with his friends. That was how he grew up. And then he got plunked down into this society, thrown together with his mom, his dad and sister, and him. All this stimulation, didn't know anything. Might be a little bit attention deficit, I'm not sure. But it was just awful. He got to the point where he would cry. Now, to let that come out is a miracle, a miracle. And he ended up going to ________ School and completing his English. That was a huge challenge, because he had such a negative attitude towards himself, towards other people, towards teachers, towards life in general. To me, he was a huge, huge success. He walked out of there with his head high.*

In summary, these stories express many of the contemporary issues faced by both male and female students with developmental disabilities. In addition to the factors related to success or failure in school (anger problems, literacy inadequacies, vulnerability to abuse from others, comorbid physiological considerations, distorted self-awareness, low self-esteem), the findings emphasize the relevance of culture, previous international life experience, gender, relationships with health service providers, and ultimately, apart from disability, the Otherness of students with impoverished backgrounds as different from the known world of the professional educators.

Interviews: Contemporary Issues Faced by EMH Teens

The professional educators were asked to comment on the most significant contemporary life issues they saw facing both the EMH boys and girls as the students finish their high school program. Selected responses that have been supported by the literature were included in this chapter. The findings are presented in this order: Southern Turnpike, Northern Turnpike: Magnet, and Northern Turnpike: Satellite, with a summary of the findings placed at the end of the reporting. These findings are discussed in Chapter VIII.

Accordingly, the counselor at the Southern Turnpike, who was the only professional educator at the site to consent to an interview, responded:

> I think relationships. I think they're really vulnerable. I think they have many of the same urges and desires as all adolescents, most of them—all of them—and yet they may have trouble finding someone to have a relationship with and then maintaining those relationships. And so I think a relationship with a significant other is a big deal. I think finding work, getting trained, finding facilities where they can get trained, institutions where they can get trained, and then finding work, because very often they don't have the aggressiveness that you need to have in order to find work now. And I think little things like finding accommodation and living independently would be a big factor.

At the Northern Turnpike: Magnet, the following issues were identified. For example, the principal stated:

> Relationships. The self-advocacy and learning how to do that, looking after themselves, how to access various organizations. They're just like anyone else in terms of their needs, their sexual needs, friendship needs, to give of themselves, whether it is in terms of leisure, through volunteerism. That there's more to life than the TV set. I guess it's the whole aspect of yes, they can, believing they can and then encouraging others to believe that they can. They're going to have to depend on themselves for that self-motivation to move forward. I think very much our young ladies are at risk; they are very naïve. Ignorance—other people in society. The labels disappear when they get out there, and they present pretty normally. It's easy for them to be taken advantage of either intentionally or unintentionally. They're not so different. They need the same kind of supports that we have. But the boys are too. Are the girls more vulnerable? I don't think so.

The teacher at the Northern Turnpike: Magnet said:

> And peer pressure is another one that I saw tons too, and how to deal with that, how to deal with each other and just to have the self-confidence and that belief in your own awesome abilities and not be swayed by peers. That was a huge one, a huge one that was harder. And as a result, a lot of them didn't have that self-esteem, and the consequences were everything from pregnancy to broken hearts because they'd broken up with somebody or fights because someone's dared you or baited you: drug abuse, alcohol abuse. And most of those kids just wanted to, what I found, just wanted to be loved for who they are with all their inadequacies, and we all have inadequacies, but they were just—that seems to be the biggest thing that they really wanted. For the girls though, since that's mostly who I

> worked with, I noticed that it was the girls struggled a lot, obviously with the pregnancy thing; but for them, that is how they felt they could raise their self-esteem. It was always related to boys, always; and if you didn't have a boyfriend your self-esteem even was worthless. If you didn't hang around with the boys(and that was the real heartbreaking thing, is that the girls didn't have the skills and didn't have the knowledge, I guess, to really believe in themselves. It was like we had stepped back into the '40s or even before that, where women were completely subservient and weren't allowed to think for themselves or anything like that. They didn't have a clue that they needed to quit their substance abuse perhaps and that they would need to eat properly. A lot of them were quite influenced by all these magazines and books. They wanted to be super skinny and super-model looking, and then wouldn't eat, and not realizing that that would have grave effects for their baby. And so just talking with them and teaching them about that, taking them to doctor's appointments, and just getting them set up with different programs, thankfully, that the city does have for underprivileged girls that are pregnant. And we have some really great programs here, and it's just tapping into those and getting the girls involved with those programs to really help them with that. Otherwise, I don't know. There's definitely issues that overlap both genders, for sure. I think some of the ones we talked about already. Anger and all those kinds of things are issues. Alcohol, substance abuse, drug abuse, all of those things I think can overlap in both genders, and we saw it with both, for sure. Probably their own anger management, just because they don't know how to deal with their anger positively because they've seen it modeled so many times in the home environment in a destructive way that they don't understand how to do it in a nondestructive way. And so I think that's a big part of it that I've seen.

After a brief moment of silent thought, the teacher further expressed:

> Both boys and girls, for sure, face issues. Sometimes girls even more, I think. And when you get into that age, you're getting into hormones as well and who likes who, you know what I mean? That came out all the time in work study too when they got upset, and it was right away a temper tantrum and bang the table or throw something. Then they lose their employment, right? So that is definitely one of the things that I for sure saw, that there needed to be a lot of work in that area.

At the Northern Turnpike: Satellite, both the principal and a teacher provided comments, with an emphasis on gender, safety issues, and culture. For example, the principal stated:

> Financial issues, because parents are unwilling or unable to sustain these kids for life. These kids are going to struggle to find work, especially the young men. Esteem issues—self-confidence, resiliency. In terms of gender and society, we expect more of boys than girls. I think a lot of parents look at their graduation and think, Now they can do something else and get married. I think the boys are left to flounder just a little bit more. There's a frustration. For the girls, if they are at all comely, there's predators, of course.

The teacher focussed her response on students identified as EMH who were new to Canada or were Aboriginal Canadians:

> We have a large group of our students who are on the streets at night—boys. They come in here beaten up and this happened and that happened, and they get involved in these things. And I think it's just, they have tons of energy and intrigue, and this is a really neat society for them. They're just blown away. Even small things. Students were always coming in telling something that happened when they were just walking to 7-11 or whatever. . . .
>
> [On one student in particular] For about three or four months it's just been progressively kind of—every day there's an incident with him. He'll come in and he'll have a fight with this. He got stabbed, he got this, and big things. He gets into fights, and he just misreads situations so badly. And he gets into confrontations with teachers. The stimulation of TV and all these things you can buy and do and get here just—he's stuttering more, having a hard time taking in all that information.
>
> For me culture is an enhancement, because I enjoy other cultures. It's like there's some roots, and you can really use that as ways to reach the students. I don't mean use it in a negative way, but I really am interested in them. Learning how to work with their culture and work with their families to help these students integrate into the Canadian culture, and the families as well. It's difficult for them. For the girls, I think that they're definitely victims. The boys are too. The girls though, I think, are more. Some of them are, like I was saying, in a sense victims of their families, and what I've been exposed to is, they either end up getting married or promised to marriages once they're done Grade 12. They don't seem to have much of a choice. They say they do; I'm not sure how much they really do. But what I'm trying to say is, I wonder if some of the families are too controlling in that sense. I have a student who works pretty well every day of the week for their family cleaning buildings, and I don't know if that little girl has a life of her own. I look at them and I think, Is it the best thing? Are they really independent, or are they being in a sense just—I don't know how to say that—being taken care of? But yet they need to be taken care of.

In summary, comments made by those working in the Southern Turnpike and the Northern Turnpike: Magnet suggest that relationships, employment, and independent living were areas of difficulty for EMH teens. Anger management and early pregnancy were issues identified by site informants, with the exception of the Southern Turnpike. Northern Turnpike: Magnet and the Northern Turnpike: Satellite participants agreed that relationships, vulnerability to abuse, communication, isolation, personal health and self-care, and stigma related to societal ignorance regarding disability were issues.

Furthermore, the Northern Turnpike: Satellite participants emphasized financial problems (poverty), self-esteem for both girls and boys, gender role differences, and related vulnerabilities. Unique to the responses were data offered by one Northern Turnpike: Satellite participant, who focussed on the experiences of EMH students new to Canada or Aboriginal Canadian students.

Interviews: Barriers to Citizenship and Transition Education in Secondary Schools

Similarly, professional educators were requested to comment on barriers to citizenship and transition education in secondary schools. The findings that were supported in the literature were selected to be included in this chapter, with discussion to follow in Chapter VIII. The findings are presented in this order: Southern Turnpike, Northern Turnpike: Magnet, and Northern Turnpike: Satellite, with a summary included at the end of the reporting.

The counselor at the Southern Turnpike opened the report of the findings with these comments:

> We have a work experience coordinator, and he certainly has been very cooperative in setting up work experience places for students, and some of them have worked out really well, but some of the EMH placements have not worked out well at all. And then, of course, he gets quite concerned because it's really important for him to maintain a reputation for ______ if we want to keep getting stations. . . . I think one of the problems is money; the bottom line is, it's money. And as angry as I get at my principal, I still understand. I'd like to see more involvement in the RAP program [registered apprenticeship program]. But even the RAP program depends on completion of Grade 9, and for a lot of these students, they've never completed Grade 9. . . . I don't think we address them [barriers] very well at all. I think that we have not had significant numbers, so as a school I don't think that we've had to face the issue head on. Now, that's not to say that we haven't done anything, but as an institution, I don't think we address it. I guess I address it as much as anyone, working with the special needs kids and working with their parents, but do we have the time to be thorough? Do we have the time to prepare them well? I don't know. I don't think so. I don't feel particularly good about it.

Furthermore, the principal at the Northern Turnpike: Magnet explained:

> Some of them [the barriers] are attitudes of adults, whether it be a teacher, a parent, an administrator. Some of it is the attitude of the kids, different expectations that may be hard to meet or impossible to meet. They've learned failure or they've learned an unrealistic expectation of themselves that leads to failure. There is middle ground, but it only comes when the school itself responds to their needs—helps them to understand a realistic point of view. That really is important.

In addition, a teacher from the Northern Turnpike: Magnet disclosed:

> I find that as much as we have a really awesome board and some really talented teachers, I still think that in 1999 we still have a philosophy that is very old fashioned towards these kids. I don't know if it is a fear; I don't know. I don't know if they're scared of these kids. But I just wish there were more teachers that would be aware of the situations and just jump in there.

The Northern Turnpike: Satellite principal stated:

> Two barriers that come to mind in reverse order are the students' own reluctance to cooperate in some of these situations and the fact that we don't have anyone to organize a program. . . .—the stigma. We also have a real shortage of time for these students, especially for work experience. That could take a full-time coordinator. To move them into a job, we'd have to have a variety of people trained, not sending them to a drugstore and leaving them there. But if we could get some buy in from say a [car dealership] to make it viable for them for training.

Similarly, stigma was implied by this Northern Turnpike: Satellite teacher's comments:

> They felt that they were branded. And even with some of them that have come here [to the satellite], it's almost like they still felt they had this big, huge stamp that everybody could read on their heads. So self-esteem is a huge thing to overcome with these students. I think also some behaviors of the other [EMH] kids, they're so out of control. . . . Some of the teachers have a difficult time with our students. Some of them, they just don't understand them, and in a sense they're scared of them. It's not that they're bad people, but they really don't understand that these kids don't learn things, pick it up like other kids. . . . We have not been able to really do justice to work experience, I believe, and also future planning. I really rely on TSP to come in and encourage the students to go there, our [Magnet] transition program.

In summary, comments made by the professional educator at Southern Turnpike suggest that a lack of time and funds and low numbers of EMH students enrolled at the school are barriers, as well as EMH students having minimal success in work experience and lacking prerequisites for certain off-campus occupation-related opportunities. The comments made by the professional educators at the Northern Turnpike: Magnet suggest that attitudes of EMH students and those of parents, teachers, or administrators were a barrier. For example, unrealistic expectations on the part of students was identified. Teachers' fear or misunderstanding of EMH students, indicated by reluctance to become involved with them, was pondered. Furthermore, views expressed by the professional educators at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite suggest that student self-esteem, student behavior, and stigma associated with disability (Otherness) were barriers which particularly affected work experience.

Interviews: Reports of Existing Positive Approaches

Professional educators were requested to comment on positive approaches to citizenship and transition of which they were aware in their schools. Those findings that were supported in the literature are included, and these findings are discussed in Chapter VIII. The findings are presented in this order: Southern Turnpike, Northern Turnpike: Magnet, and Northern Turnpike: Satellite, with a summary included at the end of the reporting. The counselor at the Southern Turnpike commented on positive approaches that currently existed:

> Generally speaking, we've been in contact with them all three years, and so it's not that we suddenly start talking to them in Year 12. If they're not 20 years old, a lot of them have come back for a fourth year, and they can stay in our school; they don't have to go to ________ High because they are special needs. That's especially true if they've gotten involved with our automotives or beauty culture and want to finish their program here, so we assist them with whatever they need. Some of the families have been really interested, and they've been here, and they've been assisted. Others just on the phone, and others I've hardly seen; I've just talked to the kids. Under this new mandate that all schools will provide a program, they are providing more. I think that we're really—I know that this sounds like a stupid word, but patient.

The principal at the Northern Turnpike: Magnet emphasized a positive approach:

> through our IPPs and through plans for transition. We are now in the process of working the program back further and further, using modules to prepare for transition, and the transition program itself. We provide real-life activities through school, working at jobs, as close as possible, working with young children in the community, helping seniors.

At the Northern Turnpike: Satellite, the counselor noted:

> Many of the students I have worked with, I have worked with for two or three years. So we're looking at transition right from the beginning and trying—and this is in ideal circumstances, and it doesn't always happen to have a transition team in place for that student throughout the high school years, and includes community connections where they can move once they leave the school into having that support from other community workers. It could be through volunteer work that they're doing or work experience placement or whatever, Social Services, whoever it is. Connections that we're making for them to try and incorporate those right through their high school years, so there are two or three, at least, other people involved before they leave school. It depends on connecting with other people that might help them later on. Agencies, yes.

The principal at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite stated:

> It sounds like tokenism, but the last two years we had the EMH kids on the stage with the other grads to be recognized in the same way, with the same cap and gown and names in the program, special recognition. I think that has done a lot because the kids feel included at that time.

The teacher at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite emphasized self-advocacy and expectations:

> The biggest thing that has been happening, especially within the last year or two, is that students themselves are now going to the teachers and saying, "I need this actual type of support." And that's what we want to foster. We work on it, yes. And just in the manner that it's the same thing for everybody; we all need to be able to ask questions and ask for help because it's something of human nature. I treat them like young adults, and I tell them that from the very beginning. They're in Young Adult Land, and I'm not going to put up with real behaviors and this and that. No, here it stops. So that means a lot of counseling in a sense, taking them to the side and saying, "What happened here is just not acceptable, so you need to make a choice." And they need time to just socialize and to be together. There's a lot of stress, so there's certainly times where I have to just drop everything and say, "Let's talk" or "Let's do this," a spelling bee, or to totally change focus, because to fight with them, it'll hurt me and it'll hurt them.

> Everybody will end up frustrated. Part of it, they're eighteen or nineteen years old, and they have some choices to make, and they're responsible for that as well. We spend a lot of time. I use any opportunity I can as the teaching end in my class. We may be working on math, but I'll stop right there and start working on whatever it is. Doesn't mean that the process has to be long winded, but I think it needs to be to the point, with care, and nonjudgmental. I would say that most of the students who know me and work with me know that I'm not judging them; it's just something that I see and they see and that we can work on it and help them together.

A further statement was made by this professional educator regarding self-defense instruction made available to the EMH students:

> Self-defense was for the guys and the girls in the program. For some of our really unique students that I've seen, and that's guys and girls, that assertiveness training to me is really important and the self-defense. For the girls, we have done a lot of work on self-esteem and assertiveness, feelings, knowing their feelings, reacting to it and getting out of there, things like that; and that it's okay for them to say no or change their mind or not be in the situation in the first place maybe. And that means listening to their guts. We used a black belt person who has done a lot of work with people in the community and has an intellectually challenged son himself, so he was really good at relating to our students and taught them some very good points, the biggest being, "If you feel something's wrong, get out and run. But respect yourself." That was a very, very big key for all them. If you don't respect yourself, then you won't protect yourself. They needed to hear it from an adult, somebody different than somebody who's involved with school, who would tell them things like, "No. If you see somebody coming towards you and you get a funny feeling in your stomach, you look them in the eye, because you're worth it. And you let them know that you're worth it."

On other positive approaches to transition, including further education, this educator commented:

> We focus on it all year. I kind of root it into them that, "Go on to do postsecondary school: AVC, Alberta College, whatever. Go and do something there." I don't do enough in terms of helping getting them registered or things like that. But I also believe that parents need to be involved in that process as well. With this program I'd say that I've seen more success here in a program like this with them going on to some sort of secondary school. Maybe it's just because we are such a tight group in a sense, and I have high expectations and let them know it too, and the parents. Yes, for sure. So they kind of get on board with you. And a lot of our students in this program, even if they don't go on to something postsecondary, often they end up working.

Summary

In summary, the professional educator from the Southern Turnpike suggested that staff patience is a positive approach. Further, a continuance of programming at all high schools for the students is expected because EMH youth are funded to attend school until the age of 20. The professional educators at the Northern Turnpike: Magnet indicated that IPPs and plans for transition that begin early and include real-life activities in the community are positive approaches. A professional educator at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite felt that a long-term relationship with students, complemented by connections with outside agencies, was positive, as was encouraging students to participate in graduation with the other students. Holding high expectations for student behavior, teaching self-defense, encouraging self-advocacy through effective communication, encouraging family support and peer support gained by cohort contact, and ongoing staff coaching to look ahead and gain information about postsecondary opportunities complete the summary of professional educators' responses from the Northern Turnpike: Satellite.

Findings From Beyond the Castle Walls

The informants from Beyond the Castle Walls included a community health nurse, a senior legal counsel for young offenders, and a former magnet school resource police officer. They were requested to reflect on their experience and share an anecdote or short personal narrative about working with a teen with intellectual/developmental disabilities in transition that might highlight the challenges that were faced. This request was part of the study package distributed prior to the commencement of research. The informants had a choice of presenting their story on cassette or in writing, or of not participating. The stories are presented in italics to differentiate them from the rest of the thesis text. They are unedited and included as presented by informants in the following order: the community health nurse, the school resource officer, and the legal counsel. A summary of the findings from the stories is included at the end of the section, with further discussion in Chapter VIII.

Stories

The community health nurse tells tales out of school (audiotaped):

> *I can remember one girl. She was well into her pregnancy by the time we discovered she was pregnant, and I think she truly and secretly wanted to be, so delayed—she didn't know what system to turn to, how to transport herself to get there. Would she be turned away because she was only thirteen? Huge issues that we didn't even understand. And that was the same when you make a doctor's appointment, that the person who gives you that appointment assumes that you have a clock and alarm to wake up to, that you'll get yourself out the door, all these issues that you really take for granted, other people's ability, and which with a developmental disability you may not be able to meet.*
>
> *But this girl continued on with her pregnancy and attended some prenatal classes, and she was at a class and then came to ask me, "Well, when your water breaks, you go to the hospital?" Well, here she was, she came from a very large family and a very low-functioning family. Her sister had had multiple pregnancies, and there was a really indirect conclusion that was being drawn. "When something is broken inside, then how does the baby come out? And if it's broken, then how do I have more children?" And yet obviously her sibling had had more children, and she found it totally confounding. She thought that she was damaged in some physical way. It's a really concrete example of how the language is such a barrier(and people using the language don't assume there is that barrier and they [the EMH kids] don't identify it to them.*

The school resource officer tells tales from the beat (written):

> *I can think of many stories to share, but I would like to touch on a few instead of one story in particular. I have heard girls tell me that I helped straighten them out because of the persistent attention to them, even if it started in a negative manner, the constant questioning about their well-being helped them through Grade 7 and up. I've received hugs from the worst [most criminally active] boys in the school. I've taken numerous complaints from EMH students of when they were accosted, and their biggest challenge is remembering the occurrence, recalling the identity of the accused, and a lack of tenacity for penance. They are easy-going youth and tend to get walked on or threatened. They will commit crimes strictly under mild coercion. As adults they are viewed as useless and just extra work to an employer. Police can learn a lot from EMH youth and adults, and understanding their struggles in life is not generally a priority to the average police officer, although it would help solve his or her investigation.*

A senior legal counsel tells tales from the court (audiotaped):

> *We'll call him Dan, an individual with a mental handicap who was very young in terms of development, but a very large person. Dan was probably about six feet two inches, weighed well over two hundred pounds, and was throughout his teen years in constant difficulty mainly because of his assaultive behavior. He was a very large fellow, and when he became angry it was very difficult for anyone to control him, with the consequence that he was in and out of the youth court constantly being charged with assault. He built up a lengthy record which resulted in being incarcerated in open-custody facilities with attempts at behavior modification to control his outbursts of anger. Gradually he did improve a lot of this. We were all greatly concerned about Dan because he is now seventeen and will shortly be eighteen and no longer in the youth system. The youth system is a fairly closed system that is aware of him and techniques that work with him. He has formed close alliances with a number of professionals and become quite dependent on them. When he attained the magic age of eighteen he would no longer be a part of the youth system. The concern was, he no longer had the benefits of child welfare and he no longer would be dealt with by youth court, and if he continued with some of his behavior from the past, he would shortly be in the adult court system for increasingly longer and longer times in jail, to his direct detriment.*
>
> *I can remember one occasion when Dan was brought into court to answer to a charge. His lawyer, a colleague of mine, was ill and unable to attend court that particular day. Court had to be adjourned, and Dan understood the necessity for the adjustment. But when he left the court room he broke down in the security corridor behind the court. He was so distressed that the situation couldn't be dealt with. So here's this large individual sitting in the corridor crying and very distressed, and the security guard, a CAPS officer escorting him, was basically standing in the corridor patting him on the back to get him to feel better so he could continue back into the cell area to await the next court date. Actually, the CAPS officer was able to get him calmed down and taken back into the custody area. Unfortunately for individuals like Dan, that level of concern, that level of professional awareness is not going to be manifested in the adult system. He could have some significant difficulties if only because there is less recognition of the rehabilitation aspect of dealing with criminal behavior. The primary focus is protection of the public, with the result that an individual like Dan who had a mental handicap and a propensity to be involved in aggressive behavior will be regarded as a risk, and the consequence of that is long-term incarceration to prevent harm to the public. That this is a desirable outcome for Dan is highly debatable.*

In summary, the findings suggest that these informants consider communication with agencies and service providers beyond the school setting as problematic for EMH teens. Anger management, vulnerability, concerns about responsible decision making, and failing to understand the consequences of risky behavior surfaced. Moreover, mentoring relationships were common to each story.

Interviews: Contemporary Issues Faced by EMH Secondary Students

A community health nurse, a senior legal counsel, and a former school resource officer were asked to comment on what they perceived to be significant contemporary life issues faced by EMH teens. Quotations that support the findings are presented in the following section in this sequence: community health nurse, school resource officer, and senior legal counsel. A summary follows the reporting of the findings, with further discussion provided in Chapter VIII. Accordingly, the community health nurse made the following contribution:

> I'd have to say lifestyle issues, social circle, violence, anger management. I miss the in-school setting where we had day-to-day input into their health issues. We're moving in a direction towards making choices; information is taught or shown about choices, whether it's from fathering a child to deciding to try and get a job. Hopefully a school system is set up to address their underlying needs. They're very abstract it seems, hard to reach everyone. Anger management is the area I looked into for a community course for our families. Location and expense prevents our families from accessing. It's much easier on their [boys'] egos to be the clown to mask disabilities—frustration in inappropriate learning settings. I have an awareness of a high rate of substance abuse, specifically alcohol or marijuana use; undiagnosed STDs. That's common with the girls too, a lack of knowledge of how to access health care, poverty and nutrition problems, and poor self-esteem.... My concern about teen girls has been that they have very, very low self-esteem; they have unreasonable expectations about what they want to look like, or be dressed like. They want attention, and they accept whatever form of attention they get, and so there's not really a sense that they value themselves for who they are, for what they can contribute to their families. They will accept a violent partnership versus one that is constructive and helpful. I see issues of self-esteem that border directly on school and sexuality and reproduction—health in a sexual frame in terms of STDs and eating disorders. The most damaging forms of disability are the ones that aren't seen. They aren't evidenced as valuable because they are invisible. What I have found is that these children, these students, are treated as a person with a normal average intellect, but they're just not putting together the pieces. Developmental disability may not be very evident in manner of dress or speech. Sometimes facial features are noted; something morphological has to be really significant. The system is not understanding what that child's capacity is or isn't. There's an expectation over the general city or system that everybody should be able to do x, y, and z when they are finished the school

> system. But that is not happening. There are huge pockets of people that, because they look normal but they have developmental delays, then their needs are not being addressed. I think that my sense is that people don't feel it's okay to ask for help on the way to go. So maybe a close relationship precludes having a complete set of social skills to interact with, and work force things—the health nurse, a doctor, and anything of that sort. People play roles, and I'm not sure whether a person with a developmental disability will ever see themselves with a specific role. They may not have an identity because they don't carry the label of a teacher, a nurse, or a something. So because they may not ever get to the point of having a label or having an identity in that way, that speaks really, I would think, to a lack of value that's placed on those people because we're not giving them the skills in order to do what they need to do because everybody's doing and being different things, and they don't want to be left out. So I guess the citizenship education component would still seem to be, if not an individual or some sort of group program or set of opportunities for the group that responds to what their needs are, instead of just what a person feels that they should accomplish at a certain time. The possibility of teaching them what they need to know impacts their health care; for instance, life-threatening allergies. They don't know how to fill out the alert forms. They spend a great deal of their life experiencing frustration they don't understand. They just know that something is different or wrong about them, and they don't feel good about themselves, and they get confused and frustrated. And I don't think that at the end of an education is what gets them prepared for life. It doesn't necessarily mean IQ testing for everybody, but it needs a more careful attention to groups of students and that thirty-two kids in a class aren't going to be all able to accomplish the same outcomes. Some individuals may not want to, but some just may not be able to. In terms of literacy, at the Health Unit, there's nothing available on tapes. If language is an issue, like English, we do have pamphlets translated in major languages, say Vietnamese, Polish, Mandarin. I think the literacy level in Capital Health product is Grade 9, revised to Grade 6. And then with developmental disability it should be about Grade 3.

The school resource officer (SRO) provided the following written response:

> Drugs, alcohol, and sex. Fitting in, being well liked, attractive and getting a job. Fitting in from a physical perspective, then mental ability. The visible handicaps make them an easy target, unfortunately. For males and females alike they each have barriers to hurdle for success in life. The males get jumped for their hats, jackets, even expensive runners, and, of course, wallets, bus passes. The females are an easy target for sexual assaults. And both genders face drugs and alcohol.

Finally, the senior legal counsel from the Legal Aid Society of Alberta stated:

> One preliminary comment that I have to make relates overall to how the law treats persons with disabling conditions. It is a situation where you start from the proposition that all citizens of the country are to be treated equally by the law and

> have the equal benefit of the law. However, there's also the requirement that citizens are equally responsible. This can have a profound effect on persons with disabling conditions. In many respects, the current philosophy of normalization, if I can use that term, whereby persons with handicapping conditions should as much as possible be permitted to have a life which is regarded as "normal"; that is, experience the full benefits of living in society just like any other person.
>
> The dilemma, of course, is that the handicapping condition might very well mean that you can't experience all the benefits of full citizenship. Citizenship is a term, too, that causes problems because from a legal point of view citizenship means that you are a member of a particular social grouping, a country, and normally connotes the right to vote, the right to be enfranchised and participate in a democratic government. Citizenship has a broader meaning, I think, to persons who are professionals in a variety of fields, particularly education, and particularly those providing services to individuals who have handicaps.
>
> It causes a bit of difficulty because a lawyer won't necessarily think that way. I think it is important that young persons who have handicapping conditions, but indeed any young person, be, for lack of a better word, taught that from a legal point of view citizenship conveys rights and responsibilities. The difficulty that many people run into, what brings them in conflict with the law is, they think primarily in terms of their rights; and in fact, very often through their education process they're told about their rights, and not enough is told about their responsibilities.
>
> You're not going to be able to fall back on the fact that you have a handicapping condition as an excuse or justification for illegal behavior. So what we find is many young persons come into conflict with the law in a situation where in essence what they really want is to use their handicapping condition as a defense or justification, which tends to go against the concept of accepting responsibility and also won't be of any value in a court of law. The same rules apply to everyone regardless; that's the intention. The constitution says that as a fundamental aspect of citizenship, the law treats everyone the same. So what we have is a group of people who, through no fault of their own, through a variety of circumstances in a physical sense and pretty much in a practical sense, aren't equal because of a handicapping condition, but the law won't necessarily accommodate that handicapping condition for a variety of public policy reasons, particularly criminal law. . . . The whole aspect of incarceration as being a solution to criminal activity is, of course, debated in the literature; but in the real world it is a probable consequence for antisocial behavior in many circumstances, and that's where individuals with handicapping conditions can find themselves in significant difficulty.

In summary, the findings from the interviews with the respondents Beyond the Castle Walls suggest that anger management, unemployment and resultant poverty and isolation, health issues, low self-esteem, gender factors, inadequate awareness of services, and responsible decision making were issues. Observing the rights of others and responsible citizenship associated with the laws of the land despite disability surfaced as an additional issue. Finally, three factors emerged that exacerbated managing the issues: limited literacy, poor problem-solving strategies, and encountering professionals with little awareness of developmental disability.

Interviews: Reports of Existing Positive Approaches

Informants Beyond the Castle Walls were also requested to comment on existing or potential positive approaches to citizenship and transition of which they were aware. The findings include only the comments of the community health nurse and the school resource officer; the legal counsel did not offer this information. A summary is included at the end of the reporting, with further discussion in Chapter VIII. A comment on existing positive approaches was offered by the community health nurse:

> Working together. When I first started I didn't think health and education had much of a partnership. And the more I work in the system, the more I see a linked role. The health professional and the educators need to see each other as valuable, as each having different skill sets. I think that there has been energy and support from both systems as well as at the personal level—a dedication from both professions to even start looking at what are the issues and then designing some interventions. Families are relying on school counselors for referrals and information. The demands on school staff are getting so incredibly intense. Things may be directed to the clinic by the school. Social workers are sharing the load; they don't know which direction they are running in because of the huge load.

The school resource officer wrote this response:

> After working with EMH teens for four years, I've realized the importance of the SRO is tremendous. The positive impact on the youth is everlasting. Many EMH youth do not understand the law, like most civilians, and once the trust is established, EMH youth rely on the SRO for subsequent information regarding their rights, helping them resolve conflicts between peers, family, teachers. SRO's are getting involved in the school and these youths' lives. Knowing there is an EMH school in the neighborhood and supporting them and their activities, fund raisers, watching for suspicious persons in the area of their school, supporting them when they are getting picked on at the local mall or bus terminal are strategies. Encouragement, sincerity, and friendship. Trust in their teachers that the support will be there, day or night.

In summary, the presence of relationships with caring professionals for both EMH youth and their families was reported by both informants. Also, awareness and understanding of developmental disability and the need for collaboration and communication among service agencies and relevant professionals are key findings that receive emphasis.

Parting Wishes: A Fairy Godmother's Favorite Inquiry

The responses from informants Within Cinderella's Circle and Beyond the Castle Walls to a question regarding the use of a magic wand to improve programming for EMH students in high school are included on the following pages. The findings are supported with quotations. They are grouped according to Voices from Within Cinderella's Circle and Voices from Beyond the Castle Walls. A summary of the findings is included at the end of each reporting, with further discussion in Chapter VIII.

Voices From Within Cinderella's Circle

Professional educators from Within Cinderella's Circle made these comments, with the counselor at the Southern Turnpike brandishing the Magic Wand first:

> I think strong work experience programs and a really strong contact between the work experience coordinator and the teachers and wherever the student is working, I think that certainly would help. I'd want a work experience coordinator at least half time in our school who was devoted to nothing but the special needs kids. And I'm not even just saying EMH; I'm saying there's lots of others. At risk kids as well. And I guess the other thing, if I had a magic wand, that occurs to me is, I see that it's good for the kids to be in a regular school. But I also worry about the fact that they know they're not getting a high school diploma, the certificate of achievement, and that quite often the effort isn't even put into that, them getting their certificate of achievement. And I guess if I had an ideal school situation, it would be that there would be programs provided that are specifically for students in difficulty. Schools right now don't provide 16-level courses. We don't, and many schools don't.

The teacher at the Northern Turnpike: Magnet followed:

> I would like to see them have the same opportunities and the same type of education that a—quote, unquote—"regular" student will have. And I look at some of the colleagues that I have that teach in perhaps "regular" schools—again quote, unquote. Those kids have a tremendous amount of opportunities to travel or be integrated into sports, to be integrated in arts, whatever. These aren't available for these children, and I think that's sad. If I could wave my magic wand, that is what I would want, is that these kids could have the same amount of exposure as the other kids. And it doesn't mean that you have to have a qualified art teacher to teach. It doesn't need to be pottery or ceramics or anything super elaborate, but just to give them that opportunity to try something. And it's amazing how many of the kids will find something that they're really strong in just by experimenting, and that will do a hundred things for their self-esteem, much more, and that would take care of half the issues. It's a trickle effect. And I think the other part that I would like to see is that more of the teachers would have more of an understanding of them.
>
> I think there's a lot of things you can do, but one of the things that may not be very feasible is to go into year-round schooling with some of these kids, because the break, when we break for summer, even for Christmas, is often pretty traumatic for them because often the school environment is the most stable, safe environment that they encounter. And even though it can be quite volatile there at times, it is the safest possible place for them to be, and for them to lose that two weeks over Christmas holidays is very traumatizing for them. And then to know that they're saying goodbye for two months, summer is very difficult. So to go from a place that has boundaries and concerned people working with them, and discipline as well, to go to a place that is fairly chaotic and unstructured is really hard for them. And we totally notice the difference come September again, where we almost feel like the entire year's worth of work previously has gone down the tubes, and we have to start all over again, because ten months are undone in two months' worth of holidays. It's all survival for them, and they go back to the ways that they're comfortable with and the ways that they know will get them through the summer. So maybe year-round schooling might be a suggestion.

The principal at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite waved the wand with passion:

> I agonize over those kids when I go down to their room, and they are just going stir crazy. They have been stuck in that room for four or five hours a day. I would like to see these kids have two hours of reading or school work and the afternoon out in the community. There's so much beyond the classroom. There's lots of things, if we could lift the stigma. They wind up maybe just sweeping the cafeteria floor—valuable work, but they don't want to do it. The other kids tease them; they can't cope with that. I would like to see somebody working with these kids in concert with their academic skills, an advisor, a mentor. That is one step away from the building. I'd like to do it for all the kids, not just the EMH kids, to learn about society. Yet I have to cut staff. The wonderful tradition of getting your

> life prepared. Ideally we should be able to take them through all kinds of experiences—banks, car lots, shopping. I think those experiences should be available across the subjects.

Finally, the teacher at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite took a swish:

> If they could do something, I don't know how it could be done, but in terms of timetabling where there would be times where you could have all together, usually in the afternoon, because even if it was one or two afternoons a week, you run into a problem there with Alberta Learning, because in a credit course they have to be in classes for a certain amount of time. So if you pull them out, number one, they're missing content, and the time problem with Alberta Learning. So it would be of great benefit, though, to have them together for a certain amount of time, the odd time when the constable has been in there when they've done self-defense or even sexuality, when we've done different things like that. Like, we had Planned Parenthood, and I'd pull out students, but you can't do that too much.

In summary, the findings included introducing a mentor's role for a staff member assigned full time to the EMH students in part to facilitate moving students into off-campus education activities; providing similar opportunities enjoyed by other students for fine arts and active living; implementing year-round schooling, especially for at-risk students; providing academic courses suited to student literacy levels; and having a provincial certificate to commemorate completion of high school.

Voices From Beyond the Castle Walls

Professionals from Beyond the Castle Walls made the following comments, with the community health nurse first in line to wave the wand:

> I don't know if it could be accomplished, but I see that the kids with the developmental disabilities are different. That's not rocket science. But because of them being different, the healthful movement needs to have things presented differently, using different structures, techniques or styles. I think the system that would work the best for developmentally delayed kids would be one that does not try to put that square student into a round hole, because they can't fit into it, and thousands and thousands of students are going through a school system that's focussed on achieving some outcome. Now that outcome needs to be evaluated on a group-by-group segment, not on a mass kind of level, it means more in the way of either integration, although that can be a certain factor for a certain student. I think the students or the groups of them need their more specific needs attended to so they can learn what they need to. . . .

> A lot of nurses are still used to the old ways of connecting. But that's not the way we're encouraged now. I think that the potential for strength between a teacher and a community health nurse, it can only be positive. They can discover with this kind of slant other directions and partnerships. Social services is certainly overworked. I would say to expand on linkages in the community, to make as many contacts as we can with age groups functioning within a specific location.

The school resource officer declined the Fairy Godmother's offer to wave the wand and make a wish, but, after much deliberation, the senior legal counsel moved the wand with a flourish:

> It's probably desirable that handicapped individuals do participate as fully as possible in modern life and that we also seek as a general rule to accommodate individuals who have a handicapping condition so that they can enjoy the full benefits of modern society and participation in the community. The opposite side of that, the reactive side, is to receive instruction and knowledge, information about their responsibilities as citizens, which, regretfully, I think, we have often overlooked. It may also be a situation where information and some training needs to be given in where to go for help. These are areas which can be difficult for any citizen. Law is not always crystal clear and indeed it is common for many people to profess not to have much understanding of law and lawyers and to cast it in an aura of mystery, where the knowledge is held by a select few and applied for their professional benefit.
>
> It isn't the reality, but I think it is important that young people be provided with information and training to assist them in getting access to professional advice, getting access to legal professionals. This is often not that difficult and needs to be addressed in order to prepare our youth for their entry into full citizenship in our society. It has to be said that this is an area that education professionals need to consider: What are appropriate techniques to provide information to the particular client group? That is, individuals with handicapping conditions.
>
> I'd also say that there is probably a special challenge for EMH children. In many respects individuals with profound handicapping conditions are often in a protected situation because of their handicap. In a situation with lots of support, care is made readily available because they are simply going to need that for a lifetime. For an EMH individual, the very term EMH means educable mentally handicapped. It means that we are educating the individual so that they can strive to become full members of society, to exercise full citizenship. The practical dilemma of that is that these individuals will, because of their handicapping condition, need specialized support and specialized training, and that means a specialized education, I think, one that requires a multidisciplinary approach. Coming from a legal background, I tend to focus in on that. I look at the wider picture. There's more aspects than just the legal to life in society.

> Nevertheless, it is one where if the ultimate objective is for the individual to take their place in the mainstream of society as much as possible, we're going to face situations where individuals are not going to be very successful. They are going to be in conflict with the law because of the handicapping condition, and that will not be something that they can use as a defense or an excuse, because when you accept membership in society, you have responsibilities as well as rights.
>
> It is a challenge to educators to develop programs and systems which will prepare EMH individuals for their entry into the mainstream of society, because we will be sending them away from the shelter of a school into a job, into life where they may or may not be in a living arrangement with others, and it will be a significant challenge for that individual to integrate fully into society. They need, I think, information about where to go for assistance. They will need to account for a realization that that is not a personal weakness; it's the smart thing to do, rather than try to brazen it out by themselves.
>
> I would say that ongoing professional education is vital for educators involved in teaching EMH students. Also professional interaction would be highly desirable, for contact to be made for other professionals who are in society so that observations, techniques, and concerns could be communicated—information exchange on the professional level which would assist all of us in dealing with these clients.
>
> A critique could be made of all professionals that we tend to isolate ourselves too much within the scope of our own profession, when we need to understand what is involved with others when providing professional services.

In summary, interactive relationships between professionals in the health and education systems were considered vital, as was the provision of opportunities for ongoing professional education for those involved with EMH youth. Techniques and styles of health promotion support delivered in a manner suited to the recipient rather than in a generic fashion was a final wish.

CHAPTER VII

BETWEEN THE LINES OF CINDERELLA'S STORY: ARTIFACT AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Introduction

Various artifacts and documents were reviewed as part of the data sources for this study. Artifacts included student-produced collages, two school guides, a school district booklet, student timetables, and an excerpt from one site administrator's speech delivered at the graduation ceremony. The collages were described textually in Chapter IV. Documents were derived from federal, provincial, and regional sources and named previously.

Accordingly, this chapter presents findings that highlight the salient ideas related to citizenship and transition education. A summary of the findings is placed at the end of the reporting, with further discussion found in Chapter VIII.

Artifacts

School Guides

The Northern Turnpike supplies students attending the Northern Turnpike: Satellite program with a school guide book describing rules, courses, and extracurricular opportunities. The lowest-level (16/26) core academic courses which are completed by the EMH students and taught by the key teacher are not included in the guide book, and the satellite program is also absent from the guide book.

The Southern Turnpike guidebook also describes rules, courses, and extracurricular opportunities. However, this guidebook refers to the 14/24 series as the lowest-level core academic courses. Courses required to complete a high school diploma in three years are detailed. Entry requirements for postsecondary institutions such as the

University of Alberta, NAIT, and Grant MacEwan College form the concluding section of the guidebook.

Common to both guidebooks is an outline of supports offered for all students through Student Services (counseling), including career, education, and personal guidance.

School District Booklet

In November 1999 a stapled reference booklet became available for staff use through the school district where this study was conducted. The booklet encapsulated information gathered from secondary school special education coordinators about the approaches used in the schools for students in the district deemed to be at-risk.

In considering the booklet headings, EMH youth are, indeed, positioned under the umbrella *at-risk* students. This heading is a catch-all for students with various exceptional learning needs. These exceptionalities, among others, are identified as English as a second language, Canadian and foreign; French as a second language; literacy; and students considered multihandicapped, learning disabled, autistic, visually impaired, hearing impaired, Opportunity (EMH), Adaptation (IOP), dependent handicapped, and international. Eligibility categories are number coded and bring a certain amount of provincial funding into the schools in addition to money received for those who are referred to in the document as *regular* students. A school program with the mandate to meet the unique educational needs of secondary girls who are pregnant or parenting specifies in the 1999 school district document that as a strategy for success, individual program plans are designed for students who are funded by the provincial government. As well, the document states that screening new and former students indicates that many who currently qualify had previously qualified for special needs funding.

The Northern Turnpike: Magnet information in the same booklet indicates an emphasis on work experience, human relations, and practical life skills. Individual program plans and examination modifications are mentioned in the Northern Turnpike: Satellite description of strategies for success.

The Southern Turnpike section does not include the completion of individual program plans for students who qualify for extra funding as a strategy for success, but does include the involvement of consulting services in the development of programs. Counselor-to-counselor communication with the sending junior high school for students identified as at risk is mentioned for new Grade 10 pupils. Special provision for midterm and final exams is provided, and extra help classes are offered.

Student Timetables

Interview comments previously noted by professional educators regarding scheduling difficulties were supported by researcher review of the individual student timetables posted on the wall of the classroom at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite. For example, at the Northern Turnpike a three-day, nine-period rotating timetable enabled some students to take as many as 45 credits in a term. However, this fragmented structure prevented chunk scheduling of community-based transition learning experiences such as service learning for EMH students (Nobes, 1998a).

The Principal's Message to the Graduating Class of 1999

The Northern Turnpike principal indicated in the research interview that one way that the school effectively embraced the EMH students from the Satellite program was through including them in the cap-and-gown graduation ceremony with the other students. An excerpt of the address that was delivered by the principal to the graduands was printed in the May school newsletter (*Team Talk,* 1999). An excerpt of the address is as follows:

> Graduation is a promise. It is the promise that our society, based on the fundamentals of democracy, makes to itself that we will nurture and elevate all of us for the good of all of us. Public education is a promise that allows everyone an opportunity to become the best they can become.
>
> Graduation is society's way of promising itself that the best and the brightest of our young people are ready to perpetuate the goals of the whole

> society. Having been schooled in the practices of what is right and good and true, graduating students accept their diplomas. Accepting the diploma they make the implicit promise that what they have learned, the values they have developed, the insights they have gained they will put to proper use for their generation's successes, and for their children's' generation's benefit.
>
> The same chance to fulfil the common promise that was set out for the last generation is now set out for today's graduates. Each generation, each graduating class, each graduate thereby becomes an agent of emerging promise and on-going faith that the democracy we create will endure and flourish. Without graduation, we have no education. Without graduation, we have no society.

Documents

Several federal and provincial documents and one regional document were reviewed for this study, as mentioned earlier. Relevant findings from an analysis of these documents which highlight the salient ideas related to citizenship and transition education for EMH students are presented and are summarized at the end of the reporting. The findings are discussed in Chapter VIII.

Federal

A task force was formed to examine the appropriate role for the Government of Canada (1996) in the area of disability issues. The resultant document, *Equal Citizenship for Canadians with Disabilities: The Will to Act*, is divided into seven chapters, with headings and subtitles of relevance to this study. The first is "The Gap Between Saying and Doing," with the subtitle "What Citizenship Is Really All About." A passage that supports comments made by the legal counsel is presented as follows:

> Citizenship offers a sense of belonging in one's country and gives each individual the right to participate in society and in its economic and political systems. It confers the protection of the State within Canada and abroad, while requiring individuals to obey this country's laws. (p. 9)

In the case of EMH teens participating fully as citizens of a secondary school as well as citizens of the community external to the high school, another passage is significant:

> Twentieth century citizenship is comprised of civil rights as well as social and economic rights. These are the level of well-being and security that are required to exist in a society. They represent a commitment that there will be no internal borders and that all those who call a particular country home can participate fully in the life of the community. (Government of Canada, 1996, p. 10)

This passage confirms the findings from the interview data provided by a professional educator at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite who commented that the isolation of a single classroom within the honeycomb of the larger high school community offered important support for students potentially ostracized as the Other, but who also may have limited their experience of the larger school community.

Concern about persons with disabilities receiving a secure income is a frequent sentiment expressed in this government data collection, which took place across Canada and included the responses of over 2,000 persons. A link was expressed between citizenship and income: "A secure income is fundamental to the ability to enjoy the rights of citizenship. Without a secure income, an individual cannot satisfy the most basic living needs" (Government of Canada, 1996, p. 72.). In *In Unison* (HRDC, 1998), a second federal government document, proposals regarding enhanced access to training and further education for persons with disabilities are mentioned as part and parcel of moving adults off income support programs.

Provincial

In Barrington's (1995) study *Supporting Integration: Work in Progress in Alberta: Final Report*, the definition of integration at the secondary level was cited as a problem by superintendents (p. 12). The question arose as to whether the word *integration* was used in terms of work experience or community-based learning activities, or in terms of integration in academic credit classes with an individual program plan in existence.

Barrington (1995) found limited examples of secondary schools among the sites profiled in the research that incorporated any life-skills instruction for students with mild to moderate disabilities such as the EMH population. Yet Lichtenstein (1996) stated that students with disabilities must be as involved as their nondisabled peers in educational initiatives for equity, achievement, career transition, and school-to-work programs—all aspects of citizenship and transition education. "These goals must be considered as serious for the field of special education as they are for the larger educational community" (p. 18).

The Blue Ribbon Panel on Special Education (Alberta Education, 1997b) was set up to gather data from across the province for the Alberta School Boards Association (1997) Task Force report, *In The Balance: Meeting Special Needs Through Public Education*. The panel was comprised of university faculty, professional educators, parents, and school district administrators who traveled the province and held town-hall meetings to listen to the voices of parents and teachers regarding special education practices in Alberta.

At the secondary school level concerns were expressed about program delivery and limited financial support. Part of the pressure for what may be inappropriate credit-course high school enrolments is linked by the Blue Ribbon Panel Report on Special Education (ASBA, 1997) to the fact that many school administrators are not aware that high school students with mild/moderate disabilities are entitled to receive basic instructional funding without earning a grade of 25% or higher in credit courses. The students must be identified by the school using the proper funding code on the Education Information Exchange System.

According to this document, the practice of funding senior high schools on the basis of credit-enrolment units earned may actually increase the drop-out rate of students with mild/moderate disabilities. This is because, faced with limited funds, the high schools may be reluctant to offer special education programs, which are generally more expensive to operate than regular programs (ASBA, 1997, p. 9).

In the Blue Ribbon report, ASBA (1997) reported that the special needs funding manual implies that all senior high students except those eligible for severe disabilities funding are funded on the basis of credit-enrolment units. The only information that explains the process for obtaining funding for secondary students with mild/moderate disabilities is the "SIS User's Guide for the Education Information Exchange" (p. 9). The Blue Ribbon Panel recommended that the Department of Education, now known as Alberta Learning, revise the *Guide to Special Education* to include all relevant information about the funding and delivery of special education programs. The report also recommended that schools place a high priority on providing appropriate programs, services, and teacher supports for students with mild/moderate disabilities (p. 10).

Another provincial document analyzed was *Meeting the Challenge IV: Detailed Three Year Plan for Education in Alberta* (Alberta Education, 1997a). This document is divided into four focus areas, including "Improving Education in Alberta," "Foundations for Alberta's Education System," "Goals for Alberta's Education System," and "Spending on Education in Alberta, 1997-2000." The findings which spoke most clearly to the study's emphasis on citizenship and transition education for EMH secondary students from a critical emancipatory framework are found in the following passages.

> Key Areas for Improving Alberta's Education System: Alberta Education will work with all Albertans to review curriculum, improve career education, increase student awareness of the importance of staying in school, and support alternatives to traditional schooling. (p. 1)
>
> Improving Co-ordination of Services For Children: Alberta Education will work with other departments and agencies to support the re-design of the delivery of children's services across the province; work with school authorities to improve services for children with special needs; support student health research initiatives with Alberta Health; to identify improved ways of meeting students' health and related service needs, and work with other departments on case review and service plans to improve services for children with severe special needs. (p. 2)
>
> Vision For Education: A Foundation for Our Children's Future: All Albertans will acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be self-reliant, responsible, caring and contributing members of society. (p. 3)

> Ensure Students Come First: The efforts of the entire education system will focus on providing all students with equitable opportunities, regardless of their family income, where they live in Alberta, or whether they have special needs. (p. 3)
>
> Help Students Be the Best They Can Be: All students will have access to education programs that develop individual potential and prepare them for daily living and the challenges of the world of work and lifelong learning. (p. 3)
>
> Access to Quality Education: Every student in Alberta has the right of access to a quality basic education which is consistent with the student's abilities and provides the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to fulfil personal goals and contribute to society as a whole. (p. 4)
>
> Responsiveness: The student is the focus of all activities in the educational system: legislation, policies, and practices must respond to the needs of students. (p. 4)
>
> Students are entitled to a safe, secure, and caring learning environment where each individual is respected and valued. (p. 5)
>
> Quality education programs develop the total person—social, physical, intellectual, cultural and emotional dimensions. (p. 5)
>
> The education system must provide our society with creative and critical thinkers and problem solvers, who are prepared for the world of work, post secondary studies, lifelong learning and citizenship in a complex world. (p. 5)
>
> The success of students is the shared responsibility of students, parents, school community and government. (p. 5)
>
> Resources and relevant decision making should be located where education happens. (p. 5)

The statements above suggest an education philosophy intended to accommodate students with a range of backgrounds and abilities. However, the definition of a basic education in Alberta as included in the document is much less holistic: "Basic Education in Alberta: A school's first obligation is to provide a solid core program consisting of language arts, mathematics, science and social studies" (Alberta Education, 1997a, p. 6).

Immediately following the school's first obligation are two qualifiers related to preparation for the workplace or postsecondary studies, as well as the notion that schools must ensure that "students understand the rights and responsibilities of citizenship"

(Alberta Education, 1997a, p. 6). For students whose strengths are not academic in nature, an emphasis on the schools' first obligation may limit the provision of meaningful learning opportunities to meet the second and third obligations. Furthermore, the document states that the school's primary responsibility is to ensure that students meet or exceed the provincial standards, as reflected in student learning expectations, provincial achievement tests, diploma examinations, and graduation requirements (p. 7). The document acknowledges that many students will require "concrete, hands-on approaches to achieve the expected results" and that schools have authority to use any instructional technique acceptable to the community "as long as the results are achieved" (p. 7). This, then, suggests the educational potential made possible by a step away from the limits of text- and classroom-based instruction for EMH secondary students.

Moving from the previous provincial government document to the paper, *In the Balance: Meeting Special Needs Within Public Education* (ASBA, 1997), the picture is somewhat different than the Education Plan (Alberta Education, 1997a) suggests, although both documents were published in 1997. This document is a condensed summary of the findings of a task force by the same name.

The key findings of *In the Balance* (ASBA, 1997) provide a strong argument for rethinking current practices for educating all secondary students with special learning needs, including the focus population of this case study, EMH secondary students. Underlying much of these data is the suggestion of a gap between the ideals of public education and a democratic society and what may be occurring in some secondary schools. The document states that parents of children with special needs feel that they must justify their children's participation in the public education system. Parents claim that it is time to stop studying special education as an issue and move on to acknowledging each child as being of equal value. The document discusses the phasing in of the *Western Canada Protocol* (Alberta Learning, 2000) curriculum standards across the prairies to ensure a standard of consistency and quality in academic education for students. However, the paper points out that no such standards for minimum competency exist in special education programs. Absent are standards for content or program delivery that are reasonable or adequate for these youth.

In terms of program outcomes seen as desirable for all children, *In the Balance* (ASBA, 1997) established an outcome list after considering over 399 submissions. Although the outcomes for each student are unique, there are common expectations for all children. These expectations include the acquisition of practical skills, a knowledge base relevant to living, a belief that they possess skills and talents required for participation in their community, feelings of self-worth and self-esteem, and a sense of social responsibility. The final desirable outcome is that students develop the ability to evaluate and synthesize information (p. 9). Within the task force report, parents reported a lack of consistency in programs across the province. In terms of this study, although elements of literature-supported best practice are evident in each of the sites, the findings suggest a lack of consistency in secondary programs within one school district and within one city.

As indicated above, acknowledgement of the contemporary ~~life issues~~ faced by persons with developmental disabilities is present under the heading "Investing in Our Future" in *In the Balance* (ASBA, 1997). The suggestion is made that investing today in the education of all of our children will lessen the burden on society in the future, a result of the issues of poverty, unemployment, incarceration, crime and violence, and substance abuse (p. 9). Recognition of the cultural, economic, social, and language barriers facing Aboriginal and immigrant students with special needs and their families that emerged from the interview data in this study is included in the document under the heading "Aboriginal Populations." The passage states:

> The task force received very few submissions from aboriginal schools, parents, or school boards. This population appears to be under represented. Racism has been reported. Being labeled as having special needs sometimes compounds the problems associated with this racism. Immigrant populations also face barriers to accessing special programs. (p. 9)

Among the task force recommendations considered relevant to the secondary school emphasis of this study is the suggestion that principals and teachers acknowledge that the primary focus of an education program must be the needs of a particular student at a particular time (ASBA, 1997, p. 24). Not stated in the recommendations is how and by whom these needs are determined. For this research, the particular time which is deemed of consequence is the period of secondary education. Still another recommendation is that principals and teachers work with community agencies to provide for a smooth transition of the student from school to employment beyond schooling (p. 24).

Appendix B of the task force report includes support for the design of this study in that representation from health and justice was included. For example, one of the objectives of the questionnaire submitted by the task force to school superintendents is to "determine whether services have been accessed from justice, social services, and health." (ASBA, 1997, p. 33). The task force document goes as far as to state that the coordination of services for children is the most crucial problem facing special education in this province (p. 6). Hence the inclusion in this research of a community education approach to the education of EMH teens (see definition of *community education* in Chapter I), which is emphasized in the recommendations in Chapter VIII.

Regional

The final document reviewed as a source of data for this study was the report entitled *School District Attitude Satisfaction Survey Results for Opportunity Parents 1987-1997* (Edmonton Public Schools, 1997). Students who qualify for Opportunity funding from the provincial government are considered educable mentally handicapped (see definitions in Chapter I.) This survey consists of 24 questions relating to parental satisfaction with the school that a child attends. The survey uses the same questions for the parents of all children in the district, regardless of ability or disability, age, gender, or program registration. As a result, curricular questions are limited to academic subjects and include reading, writing, science, mathematics, social studies, and computer technology. There are no questions that could determine satisfaction with citizenship and transition kinds of learning experiences. The inquiries which received the greatest number of *dissatisfied* and *very dissatisfied* responses include the information received regarding the way money is being used in the district, the amount of information provided about the school's performance in the parent attitude survey results, the information received about the programs and courses in the district, the information received about what one's child is expected to learn, and the information regarding the school's performance on provincial achievement test results for Grades 3, 6, and 9, as well as Grade 12 diploma exam results. Satisfaction with the emphasis placed on cleanliness in the school was the only query to receive all *satisfied* and *very satisfied* responses.

Summary

In summary, the school guides given to all students when they register at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite and the Southern Turnpike did not include the 16-level courses that many would require because of literacy issues. Further, any information about the satellite program was absent from the Northern Turnpike: Satellite guide. The Northern Turnpike: Magnet did not produce a school guide for students.

With further regard to artifacts, the school district booklet that is distributed for staff reference is intended to increase the awareness of professional educators regarding students with exceptional learning needs. Students who are considered EMH (Opportunity), and therefore eligible for special education funding, are categorized as at-risk, along with English-as-a-second-language students, Canadian and foreign; French as a second language students; literacy students; and students considered multihandicapped, learning disabled, autistic, visually impaired, hearing impaired, Adaptation (IOP), dependent handicapped, and international. Also mentioned in the booklet is that many of the students who are pregnant or parenting and attend, or have attended, the school of choice for these circumstances also receive or have received at some point in their schooling special needs funding requiring the presence of an Individual Program Plan.

A review of displayed student timetables conveys that a three-day, nine-period rotating schedule allows some students to take as many as 45 credits in a single term. However, adhering to the timetable of the larger school community meant that certain students were, in a sense, confined to the core classroom for the greater part of the day in order to attend one or two integrated classes. Some students spent the entire day in what was termed on the timetable *Study Hall*, which also meant that students were exposed to the same staff all day.

The address to the graduating class delivered by the principal acknowledged students who were the "best and the brightest" in an academic setting. The message ignored the vitality and value of a community of difference, and in its very language conveyed the antithesis of public education and democracy.

Finally, only one of all of the federal and provincial documents, *In the Balance* (ASBA, 1997), explicitly identified student outcomes that acknowledge contemporary life issues. The issues are discussed under the heading of "Investing in Our Future." The findings which spoke most clearly to the study's emphasis on citizenship and transition education for EMH secondary students from a critical emancipatory framework are found in the provincial document *Meeting the Challenge IV: Detailed Three Year Plan for Education in Alberta* (Alberta Education, 1997a). Forming a juxtaposition to this document is the previously mentioned *In the Balance: Meeting Special Needs Within*

Public Education, which provides a strong argument for rethinking current practices for educating students with special learning needs, including standards for minimum competency, content, and program delivery in special education.

The regional document (Edmonton Public Schools, 1997), with its emphasis on parental satisfaction related to specific areas of academic instruction, perpetuates the valuing of the best and the brightest students and continues to ignore citizenship and transition education as a necessary part of the curriculum for all students.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING THEMES

Introduction

The findings that emerged from an analysis of the data were presented in the preceding chapters of this dissertation. For example, Chapter III, "So What's the Story . . . At Your School?" presents the findings from interviews with professional educators regarding what exists in their schools as citizenship education. Chapter IV, "Fairy Godmother as Observer," describes the study settings and introduces student collages as artifacts. Chapter V, "Fairy Godmother as Listener," sees gossamer wings of Omniscience shed in order to provide space for the wisdom of parent/guardian voices. Chapter VI, "Fairy Godmother as Muse," includes findings particularly focussed on informants' views regarding contemporary issues facing EMH youth and barriers to citizenship education in secondary schools. The Fairy Godmother offered informants a treasured wish, and these responses form the conclusion of the chapter. Chapter VII is entitled "Between the Lines of Cinderella's Story: Document and Artifact Analysis." This chapter presents the findings from the review of federal, provincial, and regional documents and artifacts. Chapter VIII opens with a discussion of topics as a prelude to the researcher's collection of concluding themes. The topics are organized in the following manner: Topics from Within Cinderella's Circle and Topics from Beyond the Castle Walls. The chapter ends with a discussion of seven themes that emerged from an analysis of these topics.

Topics From Within Cinderella's Circle

On-Site Observations

The findings from the on-site observations allowed topics related to what exists as citizenship and transition education at each site to emerge. The Southern Turnpike site provided a nonsegregated high school learning environment. Students identified by the counselor as EMH funded attended classes all over the building, joining age mates and taking courses just as any other teen. Observations made in the Student Services office suggested that the focus within the school was academic, with posters and institutional calendars in evidence that emphasized postsecondary education at university and college.

The Northern Turnpike: Satellite provided a core classroom with a teacher and a teacher assistant assigned to the group of EMH teens on a full-time basis. The teacher and teacher assistant, in addition to being on stage from the beginning of the school day, spent lunch hours in the classroom and offered supervision to the students, who spent the majority of their noon hour in the same room. The staff received no alternate relief for preparation time. Music from the Middle East was played on a CD player, leading student passersby in the hallway from the same ethnic background to join the group. At times there was circle dancing performed by the young men. Students and the Satellite staff sat on the couch and socialized.

Continuing on at the Northern Turnpike: Satellite, social studies, English language arts, math, and science were taught to some students in the classroom using individually paced Distance Education learning packages, generally at the 16/26, or 14 level. Staff offered assistance in reading and understanding the course content. There was no auditory support in the class such as a tape recorder or taped texts, even for the student with congenital vision impairment. There was, however, an opaque projector to enlarge the textual materials. The teacher used a chalkboard for individual and small-group mathematics instruction. Student responses to the assigned learning packages were submitted on an ongoing basis and were placed in a centralized marking tray, in handwriting or printed pencil. Although there were two computers and one printer in the classroom, neither students nor staff were observed using them.

Every week a spelling test was administered to the EMH students, with the words accessed from the chalkboard on Monday morning and the test administered each Friday morning. The list was accessed from the spelling scribbler of a former Grade 5 student. All of the EMH students were given the same words, and all completed the same evaluation.

With the exception of Career Awareness and Life Management, a compulsory course for secondary students which was taught to all of the EMH students exclusively by the key teacher, certain EMH students were enrolled in integrated academic courses beyond the core classroom. These courses they attended for the required total instructional time (125 hours for five credits, 75 hours for three credits), as well as mastered the course material in order to earn credits. In other words, even if missed work was made up on the students' own time, missed hours of instructional time for purposes specific to the needs of the EMH students could result in forfeited credits. Consequently, course attendance was rarely compromised in order to accommodate pullouts for special sessions such as self-defense training, acknowledged in the literature as essential for students with developmental disabilities.

Professional Educator Questionnaire and Curriculum Checklists

According to the findings from the questionnaire and curriculum checklists completed by professional educators, the Northern Turnpike: Magnet, followed by the Northern Turnpike: Satellite, addressed the greatest range of citizenship and transition education topics. Although the Southern Turnpike informant responded to the checklist with several checkmarks, he indicated that this site addressed a more narrow range of citizenship and transition education curriculum topics. These findings are somewhat inconsistent with what Lichtenstein (1996) suggested as effective curricula for EMH students. According to Lichtenstein, the curriculum should focus on self-knowledge, decision making, goal setting, healthy relationship building, and survival strategies.

A checklist response that was surprising involved a discrepancy between the failure of EMH youth to find employment, which would result in an excess of leisure time, and the notion that the development of leisure skills was not viewed by the informants as a potential issue. This finding was not supported by the literature, which suggested that persons with developmental disability, particularly women, are most likely to remain isolated and uninvolved in community activities (Fawcett, 1996). One participant in the Whitehorse consultation which was a part of the task force on *Equal Citizenship for Canadians With Disabilities: The Will to Act* (Government of Canada, 1996) stated:

> In many ways, recreational involvement is a precursor to people feeling organized enough and interested enough and able enough to consider work or volunteerism or other things they may want to do because recreation is usually rather painless to get involved with. It is a learning and a chance to grow, and not to have the eight bucks you need to buy a pair of sneakers seems a little ridiculous. (p. 73)

Informant responses suggest a belief that EMH students were likely to be unemployed, or at the very least faced challenges in the attainment and retention of paid employment. Therefore, they could be faced with extensive amounts of leisure time, coupled with the challenge of limited income and community isolation. Assuming that limited leisure skills were not of concern to the informants suggests that they may believe that the development of leisure skills (active living) is being addressed by curricular approaches. There may also be a lack of awareness or comprehension on the professional educators' part of the ramifications of a lifetime disability. The development of leisure skills/active living as a form of citizenship and transition education is discussed in Appendix C, "Promising Approaches."

Artifacts

The three student collages described earlier in this dissertation reflect pop teen culture and decision making, which also impact nondisabled teens, including media influences, pregnancy and early parenting, alcohol use, and healthy self-esteem. For the two young women the collage opportunity expressed the developmental in-betweenness that is adolescence, with evidence of children's themes (*Babar, The Lion King*) and adult themes (sex, alcohol, parenthood). The young man included sports, cars, food, and the representation of women and cartoon humor in popular culture, but no images relating to babies or parenthood were evidenced. For both genders, future vocational goals were not apparent in the collages.

Findings from an analysis of student timetables reported earlier in the study illustrate a stratification in the classroom. Those youth who had Study Hall all day or for the majority of each day were prevented from integrating into other courses. The timetables also indicated the degree to which the acquisition of credits towards a diploma for the majority of students in the school was facilitated and the limitations placed upon those EMH students who received instruction all day within the Study Hall setting.

Students with special needs, such as the EMH youth in this study, are invisible in research-site-produced artifacts, with the exception of the special education school of choice and the special education coordinator's booklet, where they are categorized under the heading at-risk. The predominant finding in the school guides and graduation speech was the failure to acknowledge the presence and value of EMH students, or other students considered at risk, both in the learning community and, as the speech particularly ignored, beyond the school into greater society.

Interviews

Interviews were held with professional educators, including two teachers, two counselors, and two administrators, who had previous or ongoing involvement in the education of EMH secondary students. During the triangulation of the findings from the interviews, six topics emerged: (a) program delivery for EMH students, (b) the diverse range of strengths and instructional needs of EMH students attending secondary schools, (c) the contemporary life issues facing EMH teens, (d) the relationships among the professional educators and other informants and EMH teens, (e) the importance of family support for student success at the secondary school level, and (f) the possible directions generated by a Magic Wand Citizenship and Transition Education Wish List.

In terms of program delivery for EMH students, one of the professional educators emphasized the importance of incidental or informal learning. Regarding the parenting skill development of adults with intellectual disability, Llewellyn (1997) and Stowitschek et al. (1999), referring to EMH youth in a school setting, offered additional support for informal learning.

Stowitschek et al. (1999) saw a benefit in the use of natural teaching incidents to encourage self-determination in students with developmental disabilities. Sagor (1996) offered support for this structuring of such learning opportunities into students' daily routines and learning experiences in order to instill a sense of competence, belonging, usefulness, and optimism.

Still further evidence of the effectiveness of incidental learning as a form of citizenship education was highlighted in an anecdote offered by the parents. They reported that their daughter had made a positive difference in the lives of others as a result of her concern about the safety of unsupervised neighborhood children; she had also uncovered a place where she could volunteer and find a role in the community. The action taken by the daughter demonstrates attributes related to Dempsey's (1996) definition of empowerment, including a sense of control, self-efficacy, participation, access to resources, and an ability to meet personal and, in this case, others' needs. Further, Dempsey indicated that program delivery which is flexible and practical and truly meets the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities will be most effective in the long run. Related to the programming available at the secondary level, a common observation was made. Two of the secondary schools were inflexible and did not accommodate students with developmental disabilities. Specifically, at one site timetable fragmentation was characterized as a problem. Frequent class changes and students dispersed all over the school made the nurturing role of EMH cohort support, a factor in student success, difficult. At a second site, low numbers of EMH students, hence minimal staff support, contributed to students' lack of success. The administrator who did not mention these structuring difficulties provided leadership in a secondary special education school of choice.

The EMH students attending both the Northern Turnpike: Satellite and the Southern Turnpike sought a high school diploma, the formal recognition of achievement, and completion of their school attendance. Given their literacy struggles and the need for extra time and tutelage to complete course work successfully, the challenge to EMH students facing text-based academic classes was significant. It was implied that only a limited number of those EMH students who were identified as having excellent work habits and supportive families were likely to receive the diploma.

All of the professional educators interviewed identified work habits and social skills as strengths in EMH students, but academic abilities such as reading or mathematics were not once indicated as areas of competence or strength. Rather, negotiating the social, economic, health, and legal landscapes of school and greater community life were mentioned as areas of weakness or need. According to the Northern Turnpike: Satellite teacher informant, these landscapes were particularly problematic for certain students, especially those whose primary family culture was other than English-speaking Canadian. Sobsey (1994; as cited in Lamorey & Leigh, 1996) indicated that there is a need for basic training in personal empowerment, safety skills training, individual rights education, social skills training, and self-defense training. At the time of writing, although some EMH students might have had these relevant learning opportunities, there are no high school credits offered for such course work except if a teacher designed a separate career technology studies module. Not one such module was offered in the research sites.

According to Lichtenstein (1996), school should be the place where most young people gain firsthand knowledge that will assist them in their experiences in the larger community. A former Alberta Learning Minister, Gary Mar (1998), indicated that for junior and senior high school students, "We'll keep the focus on high standards, keeping students in school, and making sure they have the skills they need when they graduate" (p. 1). Citizenship and transition education for EMH youth may or may not have been considered a part of the focus on high standards or a part of the skills these youth need when they complete their education. Even the term *graduation* is ambiguous for these youth, whose school life may extend from early intervention programs at the age of 30 months, beyond to the age of 19 years. At this time there exists no formal provincial recognition in the form of a certificate or diploma commemorating this 16-year journey.

Concern over contemporary issues facing EMH secondary students was consistently identified. One administrator, two teachers, and one counselor spoke about a lack of perceived student control over life events in areas such as personal health, employment, marriage, and social contacts. In the literature, Lamorey and Leigh (1996) asserted that the necessary common-sense information needed by EMH students involves the right and responsibility of human beings to make personal decisions about their own beliefs, values, and behaviors. Lamorey and Leigh further claimed that students requiring special education are at a significantly higher risk for negative outcomes associated with many contemporary issues, including early pregnancy, delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, and physical and sexual abuse. The stories shared by professional educators reflect much of what the literature and interview informants identified as issues facing EMH students. These included poverty, anger issues, vulnerability to violence and abuse, isolation, inappropriate school programming, early pregnancy, and involvement with the justice system. Informants identified ethnicity of students in cases where this seemed significant to the story. Two stories contained elements of success interwoven with crisis. The remaining stories did not imply happy endings.

Yet another issue of concern is gender, particularly as it impacts employment and social participation rates of men and women with developmental disabilities. Women with developmental disabilities are more likely to remain unemployed and isolated in the community. Wagner (1992; as cited in Lichtenstein, 1996) pondered whether being female is, in fact, a second disability. The disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities assumed by women with disabilities is a significant barrier to labor-force participation and a contributor to increased poverty for these women (HRDC, 1998, p. 36). The report went further to state, "Persons with disabilities are more likely than others to have low employment income, particularly women with disabilities, who are concentrated at the bottom of the scale" (p. 37). All professional educators interviewed suggested that poverty and limited income caused by future unemployment were serious issues.

With the exception of one informant at the Southern Turnpike, the professional educators identified early pregnancy and vulnerability to sexual abuse as potential negative outcomes associated with the educable mentally handicapped. One professional educator informant shared a poignant story of a student faced with an unplanned pregnancy, and another made reference to telephone conversations and chance meetings near the Provincial Court with female students who had lost the custody of their infants to Social Services. In terms of contemporary issues, the results were consistent in all areas, with the exception of interview data received from the Southern Turnpike regarding pregnancy as an issue. According to the informant, a pregnancy among EMH students attending the school in the past decade "hasn't happened."

The importance of contemporary life issues as a common topic of concern is more evident in that the Northern Turnpike: Magnet site received a financial grant from the Provincial Lotteries Commission in January 2000 to establish the school as a Centre for

Sexual Health Education for Adolescents with Developmental Disabilities. Tharinger, Horton, and Millea (1990; as cited in Lamorey & Leigh, 1996) indicated that adolescents with developmental delay are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse because of their dependence on adults, emotional and social insecurities, and a possible lack of education regarding sexuality and sexual health. Moreover, Kleinfeld and Young (1989; as cited in Lamorey & Leigh, 1996) stated that the pregnancy rate among girls in special education is disproportionately high and occurs disproportionately earlier than for nondisabled peers. Hofman and Greydanus (1998) were particularly clear on abuse issues:

> Developmentally delayed adolescents are at particular risk for unwanted sexual advances and sexual exploitation; pregnancy is not an uncommon event. Those who have limited judgment abilities but who travel to school or other locations by themselves are at highest risk. (p. 584)

Two teachers, one counselor, and two administrators also identified anger management as an area of concern in terms of contemporary issues facing EMH students; and two administrators, one key teacher, and one counselor mentioned delinquent behavior, including physical assaults. Cockram, Jackson, and Underwood (1998) supported the existence of these problems. These authors stated that "people with an intellectual disability have special needs in general, and in their interactions with the criminal justice system in particular. People with an intellectual disability generally are over represented in the justice system" (p. 41).

Four informants observed that the previously identified issues of vulnerability to abuse, compromised health, poverty, isolation, unemployment, and delinquency were problematic for both genders. One informant indicated that boys faced greater challenges because of societal expectations, and one informant acknowledged not having previously considered the question but guessed that there was little difference. The literature, however, indicated that women and Aboriginal Canadians with developmental disabilities face unique contemporary challenges. In the case of Aboriginal persons, specifically mentioned in the interview findings by one informant, HRDC (1998, p. 39) devoted an entire appendix) in *In Unison* to a profile of Aboriginal Canadians with disabilities.

Additionally through the interviews, each professional educator identified the establishment and maintenance of healthy relationships beyond school as an issue for EMH young adults. A combination of relationships is a critical aspect of citizenship education. Not only were professional educators identified, but also other members of the school community such as custodians, neighbors, and outside organizations such as youth service clubs and social service agencies were mentioned. Implied through the findings was the notion that health-related risks associated with substance abuse and vulnerability in social settings might be well managed through supportive relationships. Further, self-advocacy skill coaching for youth with unique learning and communication styles was evident in the anecdotes offered by the informants concerning their daughter's job search, social life, and personal relationships. Stories of success gave credit to students' hard work and determination, showing that the youth were instrumental in achieving their own positive outcomes. Also revealed by the stories was a deep sense of caring and commitment from the professional educators.

Parental support included a wish for collaborative approaches to education for all youth. A sense of sharing responsibility for all youngsters within the larger community was communicated by the parents. For example, the informants had an idea to open the school in the evening in order to benefit all community members by offering parenting courses facilitated by social or health agencies. Minzey and LeTarte (1994) supported this idea and stated that community education is a concept that perceives education in a broad context more than as a school or classroom-based academic endeavor. Minzey and LeTarte advocated a community education philosophy. They suggested that education should be based on the needs and problems of those for whom it is planned. Their philosophy views everyone in the community as a learner, and everyone at some time can be considered an educator. This broad context for education invites acceptance of the notion of an interdependence that includes rather than excludes Others of difference.

Wishes expressed in the findings by professional educators were grounded by a shortage of funding from Alberta Learning. Staff numbers that would accommodate off-campus learning activities for the EMH students in addition to the classroom academic experiences are needed. Alternative approaches such as year-round schooling would assist students at risk. More opportunities for active living and the arts would make secondary school for EMH students more equitable. Increased awareness and understanding on the part of uninvolved colleagues regarding teens with developmental delay is another wish, as was enlisting the help of community businesses and service agencies in the education process.

Topics From Beyond the Castle Walls

In the interviews, the health nurse, school resource officer, and senior legal counsel identified anger management as an issue with potential serious consequences for EMH students. Another issue was vulnerability to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Low self-esteem as a contributing factor to at-risk behavior was identified by the health nurse and school resource officer, as well as by professional educators; in particular, the informant who shared the story of her support role in the unplanned pregnancy of one of her students. Each informant expressed a need for collaboration among professions and service providers.

Still another topic identified by the community health nurse was a "lack of a defined role" and a sense of purpose and belonging for young adult persons with educable mentally handicaps. For individuals considered unemployable who receive income support, volunteering could be viewed as a stepping stone to the absent "role" in community life suggested by the community health nurse. Resilience, the set of attributes that provides people with the strength and fortitude to confront the overwhelming obstacles they are bound to face, identifies the critical aspect of community contribution as a factor in the emotional health of persons facing life struggles (Sagor, 1996, p. 38). Riley (1996; as cited in Vickers, 1997) suggested that community volunteerism can serve as a leisure activity for persons of all ages and abilities and further explained that

> service learning provides an education in good citizenship. By engaging youth in learning activities to meet real community needs, we can help students develop an ethic of service, along with the character and habits of community participation needed to ensure they are prepared for responsible citizenship. (p. 4)

Acknowledging that there are many significant obstacles likely to complicate the lives of young persons with educable mental handicap, Sagor (1996) suggested that key experiences contribute to a student's sense of competence, belonging, usefulness, and optimism. Sagor summarized the work of Glasser (1990) and Manning and Baruth (1995):

> These key experiences are the ones that provide students with authentic evidence of success; show them they are valued members of a community; reinforce feelings that they make a real contribution to the their community; and make them feel empowered, (p. 39)

Although the health nurse did not cite delinquency as an issue, involvement with the judicial system was indicated as the sixth issue by the school resource officer and the senior legal counsel interviewed. Further, Hofman and Greydanus (1998) stated that

> a delayed adolescent who defensively acts out in class, is truant, or exhibits other dysfunctional behaviors may be thought of as simply an unruly youth. The frequency of secondary emotional problems further obfuscates the diagnosis. Some of these teenagers get caught up in delinquency. The street gang may be the only accepting peer group, and the relatively defenseless delayed youth can become the pawn and scapegoat of gang functions and gang leaders' egos. Others remain isolated and depressed. (pp. 795-796)

As in the stories offered by the professional educators, the underlying struggles of EMH students shared by informants from beyond the castle walls contain elements of strife. Some of these contemporary life issues include early pregnancy; anger mismanagement, which results in the repeated laying of assault charges; and vulnerability to abuse from others. Regarding persons with educable mental handicap, the stories highlight the need to educate professionals from other agencies, including health care, justice, and law enforcement.

For schools to fail to acknowledge the presence, learning community membership, and contributions of persons other than "the best and the brightest" is to deny the healthiness and vitality of "difference." Young (1990, p. 300) assisted in the understanding of this denial in a discussion which acknowledged community as an understandable dream, a desire for selves that are transparent to one another, relationships of mutual identification, and social closeness and comfort. However, a limit of this dream, according to Young, is that those motivated by the reverie will tend to suppress differences among themselves or to exclude from their groups persons with whom they do not identify. From the perspective of this research, the long-term vision of the federal *In Unison* (HRDC, 1998) document must be increasingly evidenced at the secondary school level. This is where the future business, government, and health leaders are most likely to encounter other age mates with special needs, unless the drive for specialized academic programs of choice prevents their registration.

Topics From the Documents

The provincial government document findings illuminated in the study are specific to education in Alberta. In addition to a strong emphasis on academic achievement, there is an emphasis on providing a quality education for all youth in the province. Specifically, the program outcomes identified in the document *Detailed Three-Year Plan for Education in Alberta* (1997-2000; Alberta Education, 1997a) are to "ensure students acquire the education they need to prepare for work, further study and citizenship" (p. 14). With the focus on provincial academic achievement exams, however, a limited view of what constitutes a quality education seems to predominate. The system as currently evidenced may not truly meet the citizenship and transition education needs of young Albertans with educable mental handicap.

The federal vision paper *In Unison* (HRDC, 1998) seems to specifically place more emphasis than the provincial documents do on the notion of full citizenship and what that means for Canadians with disabilities. For example, the federal document states, "Persons with disabilities should be able to make their own choices, take risks, and set their own goals, and society should facilitate their participation and contribution" (p. 18). Further, citizenship implies participation in and contribution to the "core" systems to which most Canadians have access, including schools, parks, postsecondary education, health care, workplaces, recreation facilities, parks, transportation, cultural programs, and other forms of public space. In documents from both levels of government, there is an emphasis on collaboration among social services, health, education, various service providers, and business. The desired outcome is to create effective social policy renewal that will have a more positive, inclusionary outcome and benefit youth with disabilities as they move into an equitable adulthood.

The regional survey, entitled *School District Attitude Satisfaction Survey Results for Opportunity Parents 1987-1997* (Edmonton Public Schools, 1997), uses the same questions for the parents of all children in the district, regardless of ability or disability, age, gender, or program registration. As a result, curricular questions are limited to academic subjects and include reading, writing, science, mathematics, social studies, and computer technology. There are no questions that could determine satisfaction with citizenship and transition kinds of learning experiences.

In this discussion of what may constitute citizenship in these various documents, it seems appropriate to reintroduce from Chapter I the research concept *quality of life*. Quality of life emerged from the disciplines of sociology and social psychology as a concept encompassing physical, spiritual, social, and emotional well-being (McVilly & Rawlinson, 1998). Education, social learning, community living, leisure and recreation, and vocational development are hallmarks of a holistic quality-of-life model that is all about citizenship (Brown & Timmons, 1994).

Story Endings and New Beginnings

In early October 1999 I observed a class meeting of the EMH students, facilitated by the teacher of the Northern Turnpike: Satellite class, who was leaving the position permanently. The students had the opportunity to discuss their hopes and learning needs with another professional educator who had been screened as a potential candidate for the position. Here was Giroux's (1988) "school as a site of democratic possibility" in invigorating action. As students of both genders and varying ethnicities spoke their minds in turn, I saw a demonstration of the qualities associated with the enhancement of resilience, self-determination, and empowerment, and, in a general sense, classroom citizenship suitable for secondary students regardless of recorded intelligence quotient scores.

But is this enough to prepare for the larger world waiting to be experienced—or not experienced—after the conclusion of their high school program? Will these Cinderellas make it to the Prince's ball and the full citizenship promised throughout the pages of *In Unison: A Canadian Approach to Disability Issues* (HRDC, 1998)? Or will the full citizenship of these Others translate into poverty, social isolation, and personal at-riskness through limitations on employment and income and ongoing exclusion from mainstream social circles? "And so we are treated to the paradox of nobody 'seeing' the one person in the room of whom they are most acutely, and uncomfortably aware" (Murphy, Scheer, Murphy, & Mack, 1988; as cited in Whyte & Ingstad, 1995, p. 9). I would hope for acceptance of these individuals' differences, if seen in terms of appearance, abilities, behavior, social interests, or ambitions for employment or community contribution; in other words, not to educate them to sameness, but to respectfully embrace and value them as community members of difference.

At a meeting in January 2000 that I attended as an observer, a special needs high school coordinator reported the reluctance of the administration in the school to mention that educational opportunities existed at the site for students with various disabilities, including, among others, educable mental handicap. The reason given to the special needs coordinator for neglecting to include the opportunities for special needs teens in the school guide book was the same reason given five years previously to my colleagues and me. The school was still out to recruit "the best and the brightest" teens, just the population extolled in the graduation speech previously included in this research. Beyond the school walls, the presence of youth with disabilities was to remain a secret.

Pinar et al. (1996) suggested that we (as educators and students) regard the school curriculum as a provocation to reflect on and to think critically about ourselves, our families, our society:

> The point of the school curriculum is not to succeed in making us specialists in the academic disciplines. The point of school curriculum is not to produce accomplished test takers. . . . The point of curriculum is not to produce efficient and docile employees for business. The point of the school curriculum is to goad us into caring for ourselves and our fellow human beings, to help us think and act with intelligence, sensitivity, and courage in both the public sphere—as citizens aspiring to establish a democratic society—and in the private sphere, as individuals committed to other individuals. (p. 848)

Perhaps citizenship and transition education could be better achieved through the encouragement of independence and interdependence among differently abled secondary students. The outcome of such social integration for youth with developmental disabilities at the school level would be more successfully carried over into post public school life, seeming "a usual expectation" of both youth.

What exists as citizenship and transition education for educable mentally handicapped secondary students is inconsistent within district schools in one urban area and, very likely, provincially. Secondary school citizenship, the six-hour day within somewhat exclusive borders, is emphasized through classroom- and text-based approaches. In the absence of a consistent guideline for instruction and outcomes for the 16 years that some of these youth spend in the school system, the integrated occupations program curriculum is under consideration for students termed in the research-site school district at risk or disadvantaged. Practically speaking, the IOP approach includes both a classroom focus and an extensive off-campus application as its foundation. However, the IOP target population "should not include students who require special needs programs, including students with educable mental handicap and students with trainable mental handicap" (Alberta Learning, 1994, p. 11). At the same time, considering the target population closed out by the IOP document, the findings indicate that with supports, some EMH students have successfully completed the credit courses necessary for a high school diploma. Further, a 2000 summer session course synopsis offered by Community Rehabilitation Studies of Grant MacEwan College, with the Alberta Association for Community Living, states the premise that "the content of the regular curriculum is the starting point for program development for all students."

Concluding Themes

The findings of this study are presented in the previous chapters. Chapter III, "So What's the Story . . . At Your School?" presents the findings from interviews with professional educators regarding what exists in their schools as citizenship education. Chapter IV, "Fairy Godmother as Observer," describes the study settings and introduces student collages as artifacts. Chapter V, "Fairy Godmother as Listener," sees gossamer wings of Omniscience shed in order to provide space for the wisdom of parent/guardian voices. Chapter VI, "Fairy Godmother as Muse," includes findings particularly focussed on informants' views regarding contemporary issues facing EMH youth and barriers to citizenship education in secondary schools. The Fairy Godmother offers informants a treasured wish, with responses forming the conclusion of Chapter VI. Chapter VII is entitled "Between the Lines of Cinderella's Story: Document and Artifact Analysis." This chapter presents findings from the review of federal, provincial, and regional documents and artifacts. With the understanding that in qualitative studies the ultimate interpretation of the study lies with the reader, the following seven themes are resultant from the analysis of the findings as presented in the previous chapters.

The underlying conceptual framework of this study is critical theory, with awareness of a tendency for the researcher to become an omniscient agent of emancipation. Hence, a criticism of this study must be made of the notion of the Fairy Godmother travelling a turnpike leading to the Emerald City (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998b, pp. 276-277). Rather, a joint journey was experienced with co-travellers ultimately making their own decisions about paths taken. Indeed, citizenship and transition education requires a cautionary stance on the part of researchers, policy makers, and educators. Individual identity and human agency may be overlooked in the facilitation of both academic coursework and in citizenship and transition education for students with educable mental handicap, and yet must be significant considerations (Giroux, 1988).

The Same, yet Different: Back of the Line for a Dance Ticket

The first theme that emerged was that students with educable mental handicap are similar to same-age peers in terms of interests and aspirations. However, students with educable mental handicap have different learning needs and likely face a different social and economic future than nondisabled youth.

Secondary schools have not acknowledged the presence, value, or contribution of these youth to their school communities in any public way. Secondary schools are even reluctant to make members of the public aware of the presence of students with special learning needs in their school.

A one-size-fits-all program delivery is not adequate for these youth. Legislated provisions such as individual program plans do not ensure that students are receiving appropriate services within secondary schools. One research site did not have individual program plans completed for enrolments that qualified for and received provincial special needs funding.

At the same time, the invisible nature of some EMH students' disability allows them to participate successfully in inclusive choral, drama, science, and physical education opportunities regardless of the presence or lack of extra support. In some cases, this participation leads to the earning of credits towards a high school diploma.

In the Southern Turnpike site, the theme of *Same, yet Different* was especially prevalent. Funding was received for students coded EMH with special learning requirements, and yet the students were absorbed into the mainstream. This anonymous absorption seemed to be the result of reduced counseling time and lack of supports in the school for students identified by the counselor as at risk. No individual program plans were in place for the EMH coded students.

An interesting point is that the school district has allocated funding for each secondary school to have a special needs coordinator, who in the case of both the Northern and Southern Turnpike is also the counselor. The coordinators meet to discuss issues relevant to their own school situations. Working with the school district's program distribution staff, they compiled a document which includes an outline of assistance and special programs available in each secondary school for at-risk students. At one research site, the special program description is totally absent from the document. The program is not described in the magnet site information, nor is it described in the site which serves as the host to the program. Therefore this classroom, this island in the stream, is an invisible entity of students and staff in terms of school district documentation.

Inequity: Ball Attendance and Outcomes That Disappoint

The government documents indicate that, nationally and provincially, the education of Canadian students is intended to prepare young people for active citizenship, with all of the associated rights and responsibilities. In Alberta this is to be achieved by the provision of a basic education, which is constituted by a core academic program emphasizing math, language arts, social studies, and science. For students with educable mental handicap, school programs which incorporate learning opportunities other than classroom and traditional text-based experiences may be considered more equitable in terms of preparation for life after secondary school than the academic-focussed programs.

The occupation-focussed Alberta Registered Apprenticeship Program is open to students provided that they have successfully completed Grade 9. Current Alberta Career and Technology Studies (CTS) modules were intended to accommodate students with literacy levels greater than those of most EMH youth. Modified presentation of course materials, such as audiotapes for students with literacy difficulties, are not in use at the research sites. Computer-assisted instruction for EMH students was not observed at the secondary sites. In fact, at no time were EMH students observed using the computer for instructional, word-processing, or research purposes.

The Integrated Occupations Program course offerings are limited and in one research site's course guide are said to be available for ESL students. The reading level for these courses is Grade 5, higher than appropriate for many EMH students. Still another research site course guide does not mention the existence of 16-level IOP courses, but rather indicates that the 14 level is the "least academic, easiest program."

With the fragmented timetables of secondary schools, block scheduling for volunteerism or work experience is not readily available for EMH students. Some students require additional staff support in off-campus settings, which is another limiting factor in the research sites.

There is agreement that EMH students would benefit from a curriculum that goes beyond the basics of academic core subjects. With supports such as tutoring, classroom assistance, or modification of materials and evaluation, some students with educable mental handicap are successful in academic course endeavors. Still, the majority of these youth attend school for upwards of 16 years and receive no certification that is of consequence to their adult life (employment, access to postsecondary education), such as a diploma. At the same time, based on this study, vocational skill development and preparation for work and the equal citizenship touted in the federal vision paper *In*

Unison (HRDC, 1998) do not appear to be well addressed in the high school setting, which values academic course achievement.

Moving to the heart of the situation, Stiker (1982; as cited in Whyte & Ingstad, 1995) said:

> The love of difference leads to humane social life, whereas the passion for similarity brings repression and rejection. People with infirmities become a marked group; they are given a social identity as citizens who have the same rights as others and should be integrated as ordinary people. They have a double self-image as injured beings and as citizens/workers like everyone else. "Paradoxically, they are designated so as to disappear; they are named so as to go unmentioned." (p. 8)

Resistance and Struggle: or, Be Careful Out There!

Students with educable mental handicap face barriers in seeking citizenship (a role) within and beyond secondary school borders. The struggles faced by these students are not limited to academic deficiencies or a failure to develop skills related to employability, but rather in some cases to the acquisition and preservation of basic emotional and physical health and personal safety.

Contemporary life concerns of adolescents with educable mentally handicapping conditions were a recurring theme. Low self-esteem, anger management, and poor self-advocacy skills are issues for these youth and may lead to crises in terms of early pregnancy, substance abuse, vulnerability to physical or sexual abuse, and delinquency. Gender and ethnicity may have an impact on the nature and degree of these struggles. A vision of citizenship was expressed that is different at the societal level than youth with educable mental handicap apparently experience.

The Value of Relationship

An education in citizenship that is offered by adult school community members for EMH students and other youth was identified without the adults naming the phenomenon or aspiring to do so. Although relationships among cohort youth in the learning environment are valued, the importance of a mentoring relationship with a caring adult is significant to their secondary school success and may influence choices that impact the personal vulnerability of EMH teens. Students with special needs benefit from adult role models who believe in them and take time to acknowledge their "individual preciousness [*sic*]." This relationship may extend beyond the school setting and school calendar year and could involve assisting students to gain service from other professional agencies. Several instances of mentoring students within and beyond the confines of the classroom were reported.

Empowerment and Self -Determination: What to Wear to the Ball, if I Choose to Attend?

Consistent life issues faced by secondary students with educable mental handicap were identified. For example, the need for students to develop self-esteem and decision-making and communication skills that would assist them in times of difficulty as well as in mundane situations related to community citizenship, within school and beyond was identified. Stowitschek et al. (1999) also implied that educators must embed self-determination opportunities into daily curriculum. "While daily choice making may not in itself involve critical personal issues on major life choices, the authors believe it provides experiential building blocks to guide one's performance once more important choice opportunities present themselves" (p. 16). Ideally, this daily choice making begins early in home and school life so that self-determination skills may be acquired incrementally, as with other social-communicative skills (Izzo, Pritz, & Ott, 1990; as cited in Stowitschek et al., 1999; Llewellyn, McConnell, & Bye, 1998). Communicating effectively with adults who can offer assistance, accompanied by the development of a sense of belonging, is acknowledged to be an underpinning of necessary resilience in youth (Sagor, 1996).

The document *In the Balance: Meeting Special Needs Within Public Education* (ASBA, 1997) includes support by the Alberta Association for Community Living for a curriculum for students that is derived directly from the curriculum for nondisabled students (p. 61). This leads to further contemplation: Does the curriculum for nondisabled students include decision-making opportunities for youth that allow EMH students to develop the skills required for the full citizenship described in the federal and provincial education documents that were analyzed as part of the research? If not, then to be truly equitable means that a curriculum alignment strategy such as the *Western Canada Protocol* (Alberta Learning, 2000) should be actively engaged in addressing existing discrepancies.

Dependence, Independence, Interdependence: Can't We All Dance Together?

Interdependence can be a positive outcome for all learners. Carnaby (1998) and Oliver (1990; as cited in Carnaby, 1998) suggested a recognition of support offered to nondisabled citizens by those with developmental disabilities in an interdependent relationship rather than a one-sided, protective relationship or, at the other end of the continuum, an independent, isolated position for either. There is support in this study for a more interactive view of contribution, citizenship education, and community relationship within and beyond the traditional boundaries of school.

Significantly, a feeling of not belonging, a sense of community isolation, plagues persons with developmental disability, and in particular women with developmental disability (Fawcett, 1996). Furthermore, Carnaby (1998) suggested that the external push for independence, sameness accompanied by separateness, has prevented persons with developmental disabilities from attaining some of the emancipation achieved by other minorities through maintaining group membership in order to achieve equity societally. "Collective organization—a belief that 'one's group is worth fighting for'(has been instrumental in raising the profile of women, people from minority ethnic communities, lesbians and gay men" (p. 227).

Oliver (1990; as cited in Carnaby, 1998) suggested that the term *independence* when used in relation to persons with disabilities can have certain political connotations. Independence as measured on a fiscal continuum may underlie the federal and provincial vision of full citizenship for disabled persons (with pursuant reductions to financial supports for individuals with disabilities). Fiscal factors were mentioned by all informants as influencing citizenship and transition education facilitation at the secondary level, although primarily the limiting factor seemed to be the fragmented schedule of credit courses. One reason for pursuing the highest number of credits possible for students is linked to the receipt of funding dollars. Students with educable mental handicap have literacy limitations which make success in diploma credit courses difficult without supports. A section of content in the *In Unison* (HRDC, 1998) vision paper relates to long-term income supports for persons with disabilities. Perhaps investing in citizenship and transition education at the secondary school level will result in future happy endings and contribute to the realization of the vision.

Collaboration: A Desirable Ingredient in the Party Punch

This research crossed professional barriers to include input from informed representatives of education, health, and justice. The findings reveal that colleagues within their own professional circles were not as well informed as they needed to be in order to carry out their professional responsibility to youth with educable mental handicap. A number of suggestions were offered to alleviate this shortfall in professional career preparation and to promote collaboration. For example, the representatives from justice and health felt that courses taken in relevant complementary areas, the inclusion of collaborative projects with other faculties, and cross-faculty course facilitation are strategies with potential benefit.

CHAPTER IX

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides data that have been of concern to a number of stakeholders, including provincial and federal policy makers, school district leadership and site-based instructional leaders, postsecondary educational institutions, and health promotion facilitators, among others. These concerns are outlined as the recommendations for each stakeholder to consider. In addition, the three approaches undertaken by one site are described. Finally, an invitation for further study is extended.

Policy Makers

The recommendations for Alberta Learning have been considered in partnership with school boards, professional educators, and relevant stakeholders such as parents, guardians, and students who are differently abled. Ten recommendations follow:

1. A curriculum alignment strategy such as the *Western Canada Protocol* (Alberta Learning, 2000) should address existing curriculum discrepancies. Provisions could be established to enhance the current citizenship and transition education opportunities for EMH students.

2. The provincial leadership focus should become more expansive, both within school systems and beyond to generalized public forums, to promote a valuing (Carnaby, 1998; Oliver, 1990; as cited in Carnaby, 1998) of all students.

3. EMH students should be given credits towards a diploma. A credit-earning citizenship and transition education curriculum should be developed for EMH students which will lead to a publicly recognized completion certificate.

4. School administrators should receive accurate and timely information about funding guidelines for special needs secondary students and should document the use of such funds for their continuance.

5. Provincial awards similar to the present Rutherford scholarships should be made available to encourage postsecondary education attendance for students with educable mental handicap.

6. Funding levels for health and education must take into account the needs of persons with disabilities and their right to equitable learning experiences, and these funds should be exclusively used for the designated purpose, in order to move communities towards the federal *In Unison* (HRDC, 1998) vision of complete citizenship for all.

7. A monitoring process should be in place whereby developments related to special education best-practice program delivery is an expectation just as has been, in the recent past, the implementation of computer technology in schools.

8. Incentives for improved programming could be put into place to support the achievement of students with developmental and other disabilities, just as they currently exist for improved academic achievement.

9. A collaboration with the Alberta Assessment Consortium should be formally structured within standard practice to include a variety of assessment protocol that will accommodate students with special needs. An example of this is the development of an alternate assessment process for Integrated Occupations Students at the Grade 9 level (Alpern, 2000).

10. Parent-education materials produced for health promotion within or beyond schools should be modified to meet the educational needs of a broad client range, including non- or limited readers of English or other languages. Llewellyn (1997) noted that persons with developmental disabilities benefit from parent education that takes various forms and is necessary to assist persons in participating in socially valued roles (including parenthood) that are a part of equal citizenship (p. 243).

School District Leadership and Site-Based Instructional Leaders

The recommendations for school district and site-based instructional leaders embrace the idea that the professional educators in these positions are, in fact, leaders and setters of example. Therefore, the following five recommendations are made:

1. School district leaders and individual school administrators should broaden district and school information program guides and promotions to include students with educable mental handicap or those who are otherwise differently abled.

2. School-based leaders should ensure that EMH students receive the Life Skills (Alberta Learning, 2000) Career and Life Management curriculum.

3. EMH students attending secondary schools should be included in health/contemporary issues/active living research with awareness education available to those approving or funding research proposals at the Cooperative Activities Program and university ethics committee approval level.

4. Education of board trustees and superintendents regarding the presence and contribution of EMH students is needed in order to begin the different valuing/valuing difference that should be a hallmark of public education.

5. Reference should be made to current research in designing programs that are relevant to the communities in which students live. Scheduling and pedagogy that accommodate a variety of learning experiences and approaches are needed. Suggestions for attention that were brought out in the study include cultural sensitivities and gender issues, block scheduling, and year-round school programs.

Career Preparation of Relevant Professionals

Opportunities for career preparation that will assist professionals to serve a diverse populace effectively could result from a transformational review of present practices. The following recommendations suggest potential considerations:

1. With fiscal responsibility and the improvement of professional practice as core outcome indicators, career preparation should include theoretical and practicum opportunities that are complementary to this study.

2. A collaborative process of career preparation should include crossing faculty barriers for shared course delivery and other innovations in curriculum facilitation and partnership development at the postsecondary level.

New Beginnings: Three Wishes, Three Approaches

With the understanding that good stories live forever, the recommendations offered by Barrington (1995) and the Blue Ribbon Panel on Special Education (Alberta Education, 1997b) continue to have application regarding the citizenship and transition education experiences available to secondary students with educable mental handicap.

Further to the notion of good stories, Appendix C reveals interview data not presented previously in the document that were meaningful in terms of citizenship education undertaken by the Northern Turnpike: Magnet. Specifically, active living, focussed attention on gender issues, and the nurturing of emotional and spiritual care are profiled and comprise the three wishes, three approaches that emerged.

I wish to acknowledge the enthusiasm, passion, and commitment expressed by the professional educator who provided these data. Narratives are important because they provide the possibility for both reclaiming one's own "stories" and forging bonds of solidarity with the living and with those who have suffered in the past. Solidarity, in this case, is forged through memories and hope (Giroux, 1988, p. 98).

An Invitation for Further Study: RSVP Requested

In my observations of the classroom setting at Northern Turnpike: Satellite, I came to realize that, to the students, there was value in the everyday role of classroom participant in the high school setting. The focus point seems to be in what the principal of the Magnet site stated: "EMH is a range." I came to realize that there were students coded to receive EMH funding who with support could indeed have achieved a high school diploma and therefore access to postsecondary opportunities other than a continuance of "adult special education training programs."

But what of the experience of EMH students for whom a diploma was out of reach? Goodlad (1984) stated that "schools mirror the surrounding society" (p. 161). If the societal embrace envisioned by the *In Unison* (HRDC, 1998) document was embodied, secondary school experiences would contribute to the acceptance, empowerment, and self-determination of such teens. This need not mean that EMH students would experience a curriculum of academic sameness alongside their like-aged contemporaries.

Students with educable mental handicap should be valued as school community members of difference and still experience educational opportunities that would meet their citizenship and transition needs. McConnell et al. (1997) included the following participant quotation from research regarding persons with developmental disabilities and education for empowerment:

> You have got to be careful to do the things they see they need and not all the things that you see they need; . . . you have got to work with them where they are and not want to change everything; . . . accept them as they are. (p. 10)

Benhabib (1986; as cited in Young, 1990) called this "the concrete other" and viewed each person in his or her concrete individuality. Ideally, this notion would apply to all students in any learning community regardless of ethnicity, ability, disability, gender or gender orientation. To illustrate this notion, Benhabib stated:

> In assuming this standpoint, we abstract from what continues our commonality and seek to understand the other as he/she understands him/herself. We seek to comprehend the needs of the other, their motivations, what they search for and what they desire. Our relation to the other is governed by the norm of complementary reciprocity: each is entitled to expect and assume from the other forms of behavior through which the other feels recognized and confirmed as a concrete, individual being with specific needs, talents and capacities. Our differences in this case complement rather exclude one another. (p. 309)

Moreover, Benhabib described *community* as the mutual and reciprocal understanding of persons relating internally rather than externally, understanding them from their point of view.

This study examined the ways that certain secondary schools currently facilitate citizenship and transition education for educable mentally handicapped students. The research involved the following participants from Within Cinderella's Circle: (a) nine professional educators (three key teachers, four leadership staff, two school counselors) and (b) the parent (mother) and guardian (step father) of one female EMH Grade 10 student. Those who were involved Beyond the Castle Walls included: (a) one former school resource officer with considerable relevant experience, (b) two community health nurses involved in health promotion for adolescents with developmental disabilities and (c) one senior legal counsel who has worked with adolescents with developmental disabilities through the Young Offenders Legal Aid Unit and has taught a related university course.

As well, artifacts provided data for this study. These included student-produced collages, student timetables, an excerpt from one site administrator's speech delivered at the graduation ceremony, and the school guides. Furthermore, several documents were reviewed. These include two federal documents, as well as seven provincial documents, as discussed earlier. The final document reviewed was a regional example.

As a result of reviewing this study, further questions may be raised for the reader, especially concerning the at-riskness of EMH teens. A rich opportunity exists for collaborative research in any number of areas relevant to education, health, and justice; as well as the preparation of individuals for effectiveness within their chosen professional practice. This Cinderella story has implications for change in the way our learning communities accept, nurture, and value each and every member, as in Heubner's (1994; as cited in Pinar et al., 1996) vision of a curriculum based on faith, love, and hope.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEWS AND ISSUES QUESTIONNAIRES

Citizenship and Transition Education Research Study

Professional Educator Questionnaire

1. Your professional role in transition education is (please check all that apply):

____ key teacher	____ chartered psychologist
____ school administrator/coordinator	____ school counselor

2. In your view the contemporary issues facing young men and women with developmental disabilities in transition from high school may include (please check all that apply):

____ Finding and maintaining paid employment

____ Personal health maintenance (physical and mental/emotional)

____ Early parenthood

____ Coping with personal empowerment/decision-making opportunities

____ Community isolation

____ Potential abuse from others

____ Struggles with self-sufficiency

____ Poverty/limited income supports (AISH)

____ Lack of leisure skills

____ Inability to access needed services

____ Overall resiliency

____ Involvement with law enforcement

Comments/Additions:

____

____

____

____

Community Health Professional Interview Questions

1. What is the general role of a community health nurse in terms of teen health promotion? When you worked as a community health nurse in a school community of special needs teens, did you offer any parent or teen health promotion workshops? If so, please describe.

2. What would you say are the significant health promotion issues of teen boys with developmental/intellectual disabilities?

3. What would you say are the significant health promotion issues of teen girls with developmental/intellectual disabilities?

4. Tell me about any parent education workshops that are offered by community health for the parents of teens.

5. Tell me what sort of health promotion workshops are available for schools in general to book for teens with or without special needs or for staff working with these teens.

6. What modifications are made to commonly distributed health care information to make it accessible to those who have difficulty reading, for whatever reason?

7. Tell me about your experiences with students with intellectual disabilities who become pregnant while attending secondary school.

8. How do you think school programs and community health agencies can best address the contemporary health promotion issues of teens with intellectual disabilities?

9. Share a story that will indicate some of the challenges faced by these young people, girls or boys, as they move through adolescence to adulthood

10. What would you love to see happen in terms of health promotion for special needs teens?

Professional Educator Interview Questions

1. What is your role in transition education for EMH students?
2. What happens when EMH students at your school are age 18 and have completed 12 years of education?
3. In your view, what kinds of collaborative relationships make for effective transition education experiences during high school for EMH students?
4. What are some of the community-based learned activities your students participate in?
5. What would you say are the five most significant contemporary life issues facing EMH teens as they finish their high school program?
6. How does your program address these challenges with students and their families prior to graduation?
7. What do you feel your school does particularly well in terms of transition education for EMH students?
8. What are some barriers to offering transition education for EMH students in secondary schools?
9. Are there any gender-specific differences you are aware of in terms of challenges or successes in community life for EMH students after graduation?
10. What would you love to see happen in terms of citizenship and transition education for these youth? (magic wand)

Resource Officer Interview Questions

1. What has been your role with EMH teens attending school?

2. How important is it for these teens to have access to a resource officer during their secondary school years?

3. What would you say are the most significant contemporary life issues facing EMH teens as they move from adolescence into adulthood?

4. Based on your experience, what are contributors to success in community life for secondary EMH students that could be facilitated at the high school level?

5. What areas of citizenship and transition education are the most problematic for students with intellectual/developmental disabilities, in your opinion?

6. How can the secondary schools or the community at large better address these particular areas?

7. Based on your involvement with the schools, does gender have an impact on the experiences of these teens as they move from adolescence into adult life?

8. Share a story that would best illuminate the potentials of these students or the struggles they face in assuming a role in the community.

Transition Education

Place a check beside each aspect of transition education that is present in your school program.

____ Integration with non-EMH teens/community members

____ Work study (no credits)

____ Work experience (credits)

____ Service learning (community or in-school volunteerism)

____ Job shadowing

____ In-school leadership (students' council, room rep)

____ Mentors matching

____ Self-defense/personal safety training

____ Civics (voting, current events)

____ Independent living skills (consumerism, cooking, tenant info)

____ Career education (computer programs, guest speakers)

____ Contemporary health education (STDs, reproductive health, substance abuse, personal care, accessing health care services)

____ Communication (relationships, conflict, problem solving)

____ Postsecondary education opportunities

____ Personal financial management (bank use, budgets, income tax)

____ Community-based recreation and leisure activities

____ Public transportation use

____ Learner's permit

____ Travel tips (passports, seat sales, etc.)

____ Customer service/cash register skills

____ Employment/volunteer readiness skills (work habits, safety, initiative)

    ____ Interview skills

    ____ Job search methods (Youth Employment Centre/Volunteer Centre)

    ____ Resume preparation/application form strategies

    ____ Telephone etiquette

____ Personal advocacy training/human rights

____ The law/court system

____ First aid/certificated courses (safe food handling, WHMIS, etc.)

____ Media literacy (print, film, TV)

____ Social skills (manners, body language, wardrobe care)

____ Valuing individual differences/tolerance (racism, discrimination)

____ Dramatic role play as an instructional technique

____ Parenting, childbirth, and nutrition classes

____ Information about AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped)

____ Public library use

____ Relaxation techniques/stress management

____ Pet ownership

____ Vehicle ownership (insurance, inspection, purchasing)

____ Specific vocational/occupational skill training (e.g., food services)

Please add any other topics not listed here that are a part of your transition education for EMH students.

____

____

____

____

From your experience, please share an anecdote or short personal narrative about working with a teen with intellectual/developmental disabilities in transition.

The University of Alberta
Department of Secondary Education
Citizenship and Transition Education Study
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Parent/Guardian Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your son/daughter. Tell me about his/her school experiences to date.
2. Describe your son's/daughter's citizenship education and transition plan—linkages to service agencies, AISH, postsecondary opportunities.
3. What are the needs of your son/daughter in facing the larger world as you see them? (How were/are these needs addressed at school?)
4. Tell me about any school-sponsored workshops about citizenship education and transition that were offered for parents.
5. What concerns you the most about the ending (the current) of your son's/daughter's school program?
6. What kinds of life skills has your son/daughter developed at school that please you? (at home? in the community?)
7. What was particularly valuable about the citizenship transition education offered? (What would you like to see offered?)
8. Tell me about the best experience your son/daughter has had in secondary school. (most difficult?)

APPENDIX B

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES CHECKLIST

Contemporary Issues Checklist

In your view the contemporary issues facing young men and women with developmental disabilities in transition from high school may include (please check all that apply):

____ Finding and maintaining paid employment

____ Personal health maintenance (physical and emotional)

____ Early parenthood

____ Coping with personal empowerment /decision making opportunities

____ Community isolation

____ Potential abuse from others

____ Struggles with self-sufficiency

____ Poverty/limited income supports (AISH)

____ A lack of leisure skills

____ Inability to access needed services

____ Overall resiliency

____ Involvement with law enforcement

The informants included administrators, counselors and key teachers at the Northern Turnpike Satellite, Northern Turnpike Magnet, and the Southern Turnpike.

APPENDIX C

PROMISING APPROACHES

Promising Approaches in Citizenship and Transition Education

Active Living:

An emphasis on active living opportunities and off-campus education present promising program delivery in the area of citizenship and transition education for educable mentally handicapped secondary students, or, as considered by the school district, "students at risk." Active living activities beyond or as part of a physical education program can range from accessing community recreation facilities to team membership within competitive interschool leagues to community volunteerism. The following interview excerpt contributed by a teacher from the Northern Turnpike: Magnet offer insights into the benefits of moving beyond school borders with EMH students:

> Fairy Godmother: How important is it for these students to develop good leisure skills?
>
> Teacher, Northern Turnpike Magnet: I think it's crucial, because one of the big things that we saw when we formed the basketball team was, when we took the students to various tournaments and they saw other students play and behave and respond to stimuli and everything, that was much more of a model than we could ever have given them in our gym or in our classrooms, because a lot of the students that we worked with were special needs students, and so they only saw each other behave, and they didn't realize that there was almost like another world out there, because it became sort of their maybe "me" world. And when we took them out of there and they saw how other kids behaved, that really had much more of an impression on them than I could have ever given them, and their behaviors changed hugely.
>
> It was amazing to watch them where we would conduct a practice; they would bicker and all that. And when we went to a tournament, there was none of that, because they noticed that the other kids, for the most part, didn't. Or just watching, when we're sitting in the stands, in the crowd, how to behave. No one was throwing food or anything like that, and they realized that they would stick out. And so they really kept each other accountable. So it was really good to see—and we didn't have to say a word at all. It was just the whole surrounding, the whole environment did that for them.
>
> When we went swimming, the same thing. That was part of their phys. ed. program, and it was the same kind of thing. With a lot of safety, with the lifeguards being there, there are certain rules, and you need to follow them, and

> they're for your safety. It just made it so much more real to be in an environment—to ride the bus, same kind of thing. You need your money to get on the bus; you have to be able to be responsible for the toonie or however much it cost, and to save your transfer, or otherwise you're not coming back. We could tell them this till we were green in the face, and until they actually lived it—and did it—and those are the experiences that are going to stick with them—absolutely.

The Girls Club:

The data gathered in this study combined with the literature indicate that young women with educable mental handicap face significant life challenges. The Northern Turnpike: Magnet school initiated the following strategy aimed specifically at the girls in the school population who were considered most at risk:

> Fairy Godmother: Could you talk a little bit about the Girls Club?
>
> Teacher, Northern Turnpike: Magnet: I worked together with the school resource officer that we had there as a full-time employee at the school, and we sat down with the administration one day and tried to highlight some of the sort of higher at-risk girls at the school—the ones perhaps who didn't have that much of a solid homebase or ones that were perhaps in a little bit of trouble, so to speak, that weren't being supported or anything like that. And so we kind of listed about 15 to 20 girls with a resource officer as well as admin, and then we basically went and asked them if there was something that they were interested in. That's how we started it.
>
> We had a base of about 15 girls, which were pretty committed, and then maybe five or so that floated in and out. We just worked with them once or twice a week, and we did everything from just sitting and chatting about the concerns they had. We never really had an official agenda; it was always what the kids brought to the table. So if it was something they were struggling with at home, it was just a safe place to talk with two other girls, because the resource officer was also a female, and it just maybe gave them an opportunity to talk with two, we'd like to think, role models anyway, and just to be able to bounce some ideas off in a nonjudgmental way, and we could maybe direct them to places where they could get help for a certain area, or maybe they just needed that time to share.
>
> And then we would also work with them outside of school, and about once a month we took them out on a field trip. It was more for building friendships between each other, as well as just to give them the opportunity to learn outside of school. One time we went to Bead Works on Whyte Avenue, and we just sort of made necklaces kind of thing, and it was just a really easy thing, but it was an opportunity for them to practice how to behave outside. And Whyte Avenue is fairly busy and popular, and they had to learn how to use their money and all this kind of stuff and how to behave. It was great; it was really great, and we just

giggled the whole way there and the whole way back, so it was real friendship building in a sense with the girls, too.

And we really noticed a difference in the school body over the course of the couple of years, that a lot of the disagreements that the girls were having previously, the incidences had gone down because they had people to talk to when they were angry, and instead of venting on each other, they could come and talk to one of us. So it was really beneficial over time, for sure.

And we had a nurse at the school, which was wonderful, and she talked a lot to the girls about things and brought her profession in, and we learned a lot, myself, just working with a lot of the girls, as well as with the resource officer. She had a really special place in the girls' hearts as well, and it was a real learning experience for us to get out into the community to try and track down some of these different programs and to find out even if we had those things for these girls, because a lot of them weren't supported at home, say when the moms and dads found out that they were pregnant, or were supportive emotionally and everything, but didn't have the finances to help them and give them the proper food and nutrition because money was used inappropriately. So yes, we definitely had to go all over the place to find support for them.

Senior Retreat:

The school of choice implemented a retreat off campus for students over the age of 15.

Fairy Godmother: Could you talk about the retreat, please?
Teacher, Northern Turnpike: Magnet: The school resource officer and myself and one of the school counselors and another teacher decided that this might be a really awesome time to really work with some of the high needs high school kids. We only went for three days to Lake Wabamun. We stayed at this chalet at Camp Ocelia, I think it was. . . . So we took most of the emotionally troubled children. I shouldn't say children; they were young adults. And yes, this was much more intensive; I don't know how to say it. It wasn't activity based as much; it wasn't soccer, basketball games, and stuff. There was some of that, but it was much more of a counseling-type setting where we would just sit and we would debrief and we would bring up subjects and areas that kids faced, things like anger, things like love, things like trust. And often we would start off with reading a story or reading a poem, and they would have to generate ideas on a poster or act it out or something like that. And a lot of that was almost like a cleansing thing for them because they got to act out a lot of situations that we knew were real for them, but the rest of the kids just thought, Oh, what a great imagination. That was really a neat thing because when we talked about loss and things like that, and death, it was very hard for them, because so many of them had seen friends and family and dealt with loss, and a lot of them aren't capable. They don't have the tools to deal with some of these things, and it becomes very difficult for them. So yes, it was really pretty good.

Fairy Godmother: And did you notice any changes in them following that sort of experience, like behaviorally or at school?
Teacher: Yes, for sure.

Fairy Godmother: Or at least, once again, that trust aspect. Were they more willing to come and ask for help when they needed it?

Teacher: Yes. When we ended the camp—the camp started with a lot of kids that didn't like each other, because again, we picked ones that were fairly needy, often quite violent, or not a really great background. And so a lot of them, consequently, did not like each other; they were their little enemies at school. And we thought, Well, here we go! But when we came back there was much more understanding between the two. I guess the main thing we tried to get across was, "You don't have to like everybody; it's okay not to like somebody. But you can respect them for their differences." And that's really important. And there's that false pretense that you're never allowed to be mad. That was one thing that a lot of them really found to be bizarre when we'd say, "It's okay that you're mad. But you can't go punch somebody because you're mad. Now let's talk about some better things we can do with your anger instead. And you don't have to like that person; you don't have to sit by her; you don't have to talk to that person. But you can't go and beat on him" kind of thing. And that's what's been modeled, I'm sure, in many of the homes, unfortunately.

And at the end we ended off with the theme of love, or trust, and we handed these little wooden things we had made for them as a gift and sort of gave them a little bit of a challenge, that "We really believe in you, and there's so many things that you can do, and the world is wide open to you, but you have to make the choices, and you have the abilities to make the right choices." And you could just see them, just streams of tears as if they were saying, "These guys really think we can do it." They were really shocked, and even some of the big macho guys were crying.

Fairy Godmother: What about when you got back to school? Any changes?

Teacher: It was just awesome. And yes, when we came back we found that a lot of the bigger guys(when I say bigger I mean not only physically, but the popular, so maybe more volatile kids(were being respectful and almost watching out for the other ones while at school. And they felt strong enough that they didn't care if they were being teased by their friends, the other bigger guys that didn't come on the trip, and it was really neat how it kind of trickled down. So some of the littler ones, the younger ones, and maybe some of the not-so-popular ones were kind of watched out for now. So there was definitely a special bond, for sure. The admin saw that too, and they wanted a second camp. They wanted two senior camps a year, because after that first one they really noticed a difference in some of them. And of course, time made it really hard to have one per semester. We did do it the next year, and it was really good. But that's something you could do four times a year, because you get them in smaller groups, and they open up more, and I think you can really impact them more in a smaller setting than we have for the kids.